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AN Enquiry K

INQUIRY

CONCERNING

Virtue *and* Happineſs.

IN A

LETTER to a FRIEND.

Scias vera Virtute eſſe praeditum, qui cauſam ſcribendi ſolam habuerit, publicam utilitatem, & errores vitae corrigendi deſiderium. Porrò amori virtutis, ſtudium veritatis neceſſariò ſemper eſt conjunctum: neque enim virtus eſt, cujus non ſit origo VERITAS: nec vitium quod non à mendacio ſumat initium.——

Iſ. Caſaub. Ded. Polyb. Hen. IV. *Regi Chriſ.*

It muſt needs be a great deal leſs dangerous to be in an Error, where there is diligent *Inquiry* after the Truth, than to err, and neglect ſuch Inquiry.

Anon. Apophthegms.

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AN INQUIRY CONCERNING Virtue and Happiness.

IN A LETTER to a FRIEND.

BRITISH MUSEUM

PREFACE

BY THE EDITOR.

THE Author of the following Inquiry hath, in his own Advertiſement, informed his Readers, what gave Riſe to his Work; when it was compoſed; and why he deſigned it for the Public. Agreeably to this Deſign, it is now communicated to the World, tho' not, alas! by the Author, whom the great Diſpoſer of all things hath been pleaſed to take to himſelf.

THE ſame Advertiſement, written not many Months before the Author's Deceaſe, may ſerve likewiſe to ſhew,

that theſe Papers were not left imperfect, as Poſthumous Works generally are, but had lain by him ſome Years, finiſhed in the manner they are now publiſhed; excepting only the alteration of a few expreſſions, that make no change in the ſenſe; and which it would be an over-ſcrupulous Affectation to point out.

WHY the Work has lain by ſo long unpubliſhed, can be an Inquiry of but ſmall Importance. If the Author's reaſon that it was originally deſigned only for private uſe be not ſatisfactory, let it however ſuffice, that no time can be too late for ſo acute, well-weighed, and intereſting a Performance. Nor is it much more material who is the Author. He was himſelf content to be concealed, and all the farther Liberty that ſhall here be uſed is to ſay, that whoever ſhall ſpeak of him as he was, will repreſent him

him as warmly zealous for the Truth; of unalterable Integrity; and a ſtrenuous Aſſerter of Civil and Religious Liberty.

In peruſing the Work itſelf, it will be very expedient to be fully poſſeſſed of the Ideas the Author annexes to particular Terms, which he carefully defines. It is moreover but equitable, that no one ſhould make a judgment of it, 'till he has gone thro', and weighed the Whole. And this is the rather needful to be ſuggeſted, becauſe variety of Subjects are touched upon; and particular parts may ſeem to carry with them a peculiarity of ſentiment; which, it is preſumed, will vaniſh, or however appear in a different light, when thoſe parts are ſeen in their connections with the general plan. Even learned men are too apt, in reading, to determine upon the Merit of a performance, from ſeparate portions thereof. It is a method of

proceeding which, in reſpect of matters depending before a Court of Judicature, no man offers to defend, and which yet, in our Inquiries after Truths, even the moſt important, we every day practiſe, without ſuſpecting the Unfairneſs of it. The Author's general ſcheme, and his way of thinking, and reaſoning, are one and uniform, and without an acquaintance with them, it is impoſſible to make any fair judgment at all.

If, in particular parts, the reaſoning ſhould appear ſomewhat abſtruſe, that was unavoidable, from the nature of the ſubject, and the method in which the Author was led to handle it: otherwiſe it is hoped, and believed, that Obſcurity will by no means be thought the Fault of the performance: for indeed, where the

† Quid eſt in vita tanto opere quaerendum quam quid ſit finis, quid extremum, quid ultimum, quo ſint omnia bene vivendi, rectèque faciendi conſilia referenda? Quid

ſubject did not unavoidably require abſtract reaſoning, there are perhaps few Works in which the moſt intereſting Truths are delivered with greater Brevity and Perſpicuity.

THE general Topics here diſcuſſed have, it muſt be acknowledged, been the ſubject of frequent Inquiry, both in ancient and later times. But ſure, † *What is Truth, and our Duty? What, and Where, is true Happineſs?* can never be Queſtions out of date, 'till all mankind are agreed in thoſe moſt important points. But that is a circumſtance we have more reaſon to hope, than expect to ſee accompliſhed. Many have unqueſtionably wandered *wholly* beſide the Mark; ſome have *in part* miſtaken it; but what is ſo much the concern of all, All have a Right to inquire

† Quid ſequatur natura ut ſummum ex rebus expetendis? Quid fugiat ut extremum malorum, *Cic. de Fin.* L. i. c. 4.

after. And if, in conſequence of that ſearch, men communicate to the world ſuch diſcoveries, as appear to carry Truth with them, it is a token of a benevolent diſpoſition towards mankind. The only danger is, leſt they who are but ſuperficially verſed in inquiries of this nature ſhould, by their ſchemes, lay a foundation for the ‡ ſubverſion of all true Morality: and ſuch undeniably have been ſome *ſelfiſh* ſyſtems lately offered to the world; tho' their Authors unqueſtionably have not been aware of ſo dreadful a Conſequence.

But if a farther Apology is ſtill required, it can be, as ſhould ſeem, only by ſuch an one as has not yet peruſed the book itſelf; for however theſe topics may have been already

‡ Sunt nonnullae Diſciplinae, quae propoſitis bonorum & malorum finibus, officium omne pervertunt. Nam qui ſummum bonum ſic inſtituit, ut nihil habeat cum virtute conjunctum; idque *ſuis Commodis*, non Honeſtate

canvaſſed, it is more than probable that, after a careful peruſal, He will acknowledge He has not *often* ſeen them handled ſo acutely, fully, and with ſuch ſtrength of conviction. However, for his ſatisfaction, one Step farther may be advanced, and it may be affirmed, that He will find ſome points ſet in a new light, if not ſome Truths now firſt propoſed with their Evidence. If it may be allowed to point out one or two, amongſt ſeveral which, it is apprehended, will be of this number, to the generality of readers, perhaps it were not amiſs, to inſtance in that to us moſt fundamental of all truths, the certainty of human Freedom or Agency; which, how forceably and unanſwerably ſoever it may already have been urged, by other writers; has, per-

neſtate metitur; hic, ſi ſibi ipſe conſentiat, & non interdum Naturae bonitate vincatur, neque Amicitiam colere poſſit, nec Juſtitiam, nec Liberalitatem. *Cic. Off.* Lib. i. c. 2. & *De Finib.* L. ii. c. 35.

haps,

haps, never been before at once ſo clearly and ſimply ſtated: and in that other moſt important one, the *entire* Dependence upon God of all his Creatures, for every degree of *Happineſs*; it being his moſt *free* Gift, and *unconnected*, farther than by his *voluntary Appointment*, with any State, Condition, Circumſtance, Perſuaſion, or Action whatſoever.

But tho' in this I ſhould be thought miſtaken; yet in another reſpect, and that a very important one to the reader, there is room to be more confident; and He may be aſſured, that the whole is written with the moſt unbiaſſed regard to Truth, and Truth only. That is the one great point in view; and in that purſuit, the nobleſt that can employ a rational mind, the Author was very little ſollicitous whither it led him. The ways of Truth, He was ſure, throughout were moſt ſacred; and the

the End to which he has been led is This: That our indiſpenſible Duty requires of us, a reaſonable conduct in all our tranſactions: an humble and entire dependence at all times upon God: and, in conſequence of both theſe, pious and religious Hopes, and Expectations, both Here, and in another Life. If in this attempt He has ſucceeded, it need not be ſaid what is the merit of the performance: if He has not, let it be added; that to err is human, but his Love of Truth is ſtill the ſame; and every good mind muſt be pleaſed with the ingenuous Candor of the Inquirer throughout; tho' he ſhould in any particular point believe Him to be miſtaken. No one could be more ſenſible than the Author, how many Prejudices Truth has to contend with, even in a man's own breaſt. He endeavored his utmoſt to diveſt Himſelf of them, as far as human nature can

can do it. And would all men be in earneſt in this reſpect, it could not be, but that inquiring men would be more united than they are, as to their perſuaſions about moral and religious points: for Truth is not, in itſelf, a vague and uncertain thing.

If what has been now advanced be the Truth, no farther recommendation of the work will perhaps be neceſſary; and yet it were ſcarce excuſeable to forbear adding, that, beſides the Reaſonings of a Mind truly philoſophical, thro' the whole of it prevail the Principles of an Heart as truly pious. Indeed our entire Dependence upon God, for every thing that we have, enjoy, or hope, and the high Obligation to obey Him, both in conſequence of this, and upon an higher principle, even the eternal, and ſo unalterable Relation of things to each other, as that God Himſelf can-

cannot exempt us from it; appear throughout to be principles immoveably fixed in the mind of this true Philoſopher: and in this work they every where prevail; and are uſed to the moſt important purpoſes of our conduct, in every ſtate and condition of life.

I KNOW not whether the Inquiry will be looked upon as a Syſtem of Ethics; that it is a Treaſure of moſt important Truths, reſpecting the Religion, and Morals, of Individuals; and the Peace, and Happineſs, of all Mankind; is no more than a juſt Deſcription of it.

ALL Inquiries of this kind muſt have for their Baſis, the Conſideration (1.) of God's Nature and Perfections: (2.) of our own Natures and Capacities: and (3.) of thoſe of our Fellow-creatures to which our Actions relate.

WITH

With regard to the Attributes of God; they are reſted upon, perhaps, the moſt immoveable foundation of all, his neceſſary exiſtence; tho' there be many other very ſatisfactory ones. The Author is deſignedly ſhort upon this head; and there are many very excellent performances, profeſſedly upon this ſubject; in particular, thoſe never enough to be commended Diſcourſes by Mr. *Abernethy*, firſt publiſhed in *England* about eight Years ſince.

The Truths then aſſerted reſpecting the *Deity* are (1.) That He is in Himſelf a Being of all poſſible Perfections natural and moral; and (2.) relatively to all other Beings, the Maker, and Diſpoſer of every thing, whether animate or inanimate; and (3.) the Governor and Judge of all moral Beings: and (4.) *Truth*, or the real natures of things in themſelves, and their circumſtances, and re-

relations to each other, is to Him the Rule of his Actions.

THE TRUTHS reſpecting *Man* are, (1.) That He is an imperfect, dependent Being, conſiſting of a Body entirely Paſſive, and a Soul naturally immortal, which is the Principle of Activity: (2.) That He is a *ſenſible* Being, ſubject to impreſſions of Pleaſure and Pain, Happineſs and Miſery; with Paſſions and Affections, which are no other than ſeveral Sorts of Pleaſure and Pain: (3.) That He is an *Agent*, or free; (to aſk if a Man be free, being the ſame as to aſk if He be an Agent;) He is free to act, or (which is preciſely the ſame thing) to will; (meaning thereby the voluntary Exertion of the mind;) for it is alone the Capacity of *willing*, that conſtitutes any Being an Agent; in as much as, the producing the Outward act, or natural Effect, implies only *Power*, not Agency, which are very

very different Ideas. And it is paſt controverſy, that Power may poſſibly reſide in a ſubject that is no Agent; as alſo Agency may in a ſubject that has no Power, that is, not a capacity of producing any natural Effect. (4.) Man is moreover in a degree *reaſonable*, or (which is the ſame) capable of perceiving Truth. And this faculty is what alone renders any Agent *moral*, (that is, capable of diſcerning the natures, and circumſtances, and relations of things, and and the obligations that do thence ariſe,) the Perception of Truth, and of moral obligation, being the ſame thing. (5.) *As ſuch* a moral Agent then He is in his Actions, that is in the exerciſe of his Power, under the ſame Obligation to Reaſon or Truth, with every other reaſonable Being whatever; and this Obligation holds, ſeparate from every conſideration of Happineſs or Miſery; in as much as a Senſibility of Happineſs, is very

diſtinct

diſtinct from a Capacity of perceiving Truth; and they may, either of them, poſſibly, reſide in a Being without the other. And that there is no foundation for Morality in a Senſe of Happineſs, is farther evident, becauſe Happineſs itſelf is never to be purſued but, like all other Ends, when it is fit or reaſonable ſo to do; and that which is reaſonable or fit to be done, is not alterable by circumſtances of pleaſure and pain: ſo that the reaſonableneſs is *firſt* to be conſidered, by reaſonable Beings, and is therefore the final End; and after that, by reaſonable Beings, who are likewiſe ſenſible, follows the conſideration of Happineſs, which is therefore only a ſubordinate End.—In one caſe indeed Happineſs may be ſaid to lay a moral obligation to action; that is, when no moral obligations appear to the contrary; and that reſts upon this ſingle Truth, that Pleaſure is ever preferable to Pain. (6.) Man is likewiſe

wiſe in a ſtate of Trial, and accountable for his moral conduct; and more or leſs under Guilt; and ſubject to Condemnation.

THE Nature of *Virtue* to all moral Agents is, a Conformity in all their Actions to Truth, to the natures, circumſtances, and relations of things, that ſuch Beings can obſerve, and can affect.

VIRTUE in Man reſpects either his Principles, or elſe the Conformity of his Behaviour to them. Virtue reſpecting his *Principles*, can only be meaſured by his actual and voluntary Love of Truth; (meaning an act of the mind, ſeparate from the bare aſſent) and his conſequential faithful care, to embrace no principles but what are agreeable to it; which conſtitutes Integrity, and neceſſarily includes a Right in every Man to judge for himſelf; and then, in reſpect of

the Perſon's ſelf, where this Virtue ſincerely prevails, his Opinions cannot be wrong; and, be they what they will, he has all the Merit of Right Opinion.—And as to the Virtue of Men's *Actions*, the particular inſtances of Virtue, and the Actions which Reaſon and Truth require to be done by man, (or any particular moral Agent,) depend altogether upon the Powers and Circumſtances of the Agent. And thus every Being's real Abilities muſt be the meaſure of his Duty in this reſpect, and the actual practice of Virtue by men, cannot be required of them beyond their faithful Endeavors. So that actual Love of Truth, is the only virtuous Principle; and actual Obedience to Conſcience, to the beſt of Men's Power, is the only virtuous Practice.—

In the exerciſe of Virtue, man may be conſidered in relation to his Maker; to Himſelf; to thoſe of his

Fellow-creatures, to whom his actions may relate.

THE particulars of DUTY in reſpect of our *Maker* are, (1.) All poſſible inward Reverence and Eſteem, and all ſuitable outward expreſſions of that inward reverence; which however can themſelves be no farther religious, than they expreſs truly our inward and ſpiritual Actions; for Real Religion can be only of the Heart. (2.) Perfect Submiſſion to his Will, in every circumſtance of our condition, as our natural Lord. And (3.) Intire active Obedience to Him as our moral Governor; and this under a conſtant ſenſe of his being always preſent; and the Judge of all our actions.

THE Particulars of DUTY in reſpect of a Man's *ſelf* are; (1.) To act with Choice, in a conſcientious regard of Truth. (2.) To act under

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a due ſenſe of our own Imperfections; endeavoring our utmoſt to remedy them; yet always with ſuitable Humility, both in the valuation of ourſelves, and in our intercourſe with others. (3.) Never to ſuffer any inferior Paſſions, or Bodily Affections, to uſurp upon the Superiority of the Mind. (4.) Ever to act with a view to the Whole of our exiſtence; and therefore as Beings that ſhall continue in another life of immortality. (5.) Always, as ſenſible Beings, to act with a regard to Happineſs, which is ever more reaſonably to be choſen than Miſery; but that invariably in due ſubordination to higher moral Obligations; for a regard to Intereſt, Pleaſure, or Pain, can lay no moral obligation at all, but where actions relate to them alone. (6.) To conſider ourſelves as in a ſtate of Probation only, not Perfection; and therefore under obligations of Contentment, Patience and Cou-

rage. (7.) To remember that we are imperfect in our beſt actions; and, at beſt, Guilty in the Eyes of God. (8.) And to treat every real Diſadvantage in our condition, as what we cannot help, or avoid; and every actual or attainable Advantage, as a foundation of Duty.

But beſides the *Truths* relating to God, and a Man's ſelf; He ſtands related to other Beings in the creation, more eſpecially to Mankind; and is therefore under ſuitable Obligations. The General Truths are; (1.) That Man as endued with moral Capacities, has naturally Rights and Properties; acquires thereby Dominion over himſelf, His Actions, and juſt Poſſeſſions; in which reſpect all Men are equal: (2.) That we are, by our very Make, naturally Social, and, by artificial Appointments, connected under Governments: (3.) That we are under the more particular relations of Kindred,

dred, and Families: and, (4.) That the general Happineſs of Mankind depends very much upon the Actions of Individuals, much more than is generally imagined; as likewiſe the Happineſs of Beings merely ſenſible.

THE Particulars of DUTY in reſpect of our Fellow-creatures are; (1.) That we ſhould in no reſpect encroach upon their Rights; but exactly fulfil all Juſtice and Honeſty to all. (2.) That they who are entruſted with Power, in whatever degree, ſhould faithfully uſe that Power within the bounds of Equity, and proper Compaſſion. (3.) That we ſhould ever pay all Reſpect, Submiſſion, and Obedience to Laws, and aſſiſt Government with our beſt Abilities; and never ſacrifice the Bleſſings thereof to our private Intereſts. (4.) That in our private Family-relations, or thoſe of Friends, Neighbors, Acquaintances, Dependents, and the like,

we ſhould all faithfully diſcharge, mutually, our every voluntary Engagement; and comply with them in all their Conſequences; aſſiſting, and encouraging, each other, ſo far as we are able. Not ſuffering however any private attachments to interfere with, certainly not to exclude, a Principle of Univerſal Love and Good-will, which is the Principle of Reaſon and Truth that ſhould direct all our affections. (5.) That we ſhould, to our utmoſt, in every reſpect forward the Happineſs of all individuals of our own ſpecies; and ever remember the Senſibility to Pleaſure and Pain, of the Beings of a lower Order; who, in conſequence of that, have a reaſonable Right to our Care and Mercy, in the various Uſes and Deſtinations, for which they ſeem appointed.

BUT beſides the *Rationality* of Man, He is to be conſidered in another

other view, as a *ſenſible* Being, and therefore concerned in the Attainment of *Happineſs*; which is a Perception of the Mind, and neither more nor leſs to any Being than it's agreeable Senſations. The general *Truths* then, reſpecting Happineſs with which we are concerned are theſe, (1.) That it is in itſelf of a very *uncertain* nature: We hardly know what it is; yet leſs where to find it; and few own that they poſſeſs it. We are ſenſible it is very little in our own power or direction. We know not that the ſame objects do equally affect any two capacities; or even the ſame, at different times; and the degree of it is always according to each different Perſon's own Apprehenſion. We can make no judgment, or a very imperfect one, of another's Pleaſure; and ſo have no Rule but Truth for thoſe of our Actions which regard another's Happineſs. Every Being's Happineſs muſt be according to its Nature. A great

great part of our Pleaſure conſiſts in the Abſence of Pain, of which we ſeem much more ſenſible than of Pleaſure. What real Happineſs we do enjoy is natural; often unlooked for; nor can we ſay what, upon the whole, (for we know next to nothing of the Conſequences,) and in our whole duration, will be for our Happineſs. The ſlighteſt Experience will diſcover, that very little ever ariſes from things and circumſtances themſelves; but, under the Will of God, depends much upon our own Tempers and Diſpoſitions. (2.) That no Practice is neceſſarily attended with Happineſs, no Object is the neceſſary Cauſe of it. It is a Conſtitution of God, in certain natures and circumſtances, dependent originally and conſtantly upon his Will; and Pleaſure and Pain are no other than, that ſtate of Senſation of any Being which God wills, under certain relations and actions. It is always the mere Gift of God. (3.) That,

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to a ſenſible Being, as Happineſs is ever preferable to Miſery, men are obliged to purſue it in all their actions. It is a moral Duty to ſeek after Happineſs, men's beſt and final Happineſs; in ſo much that he is unreaſonable who neglects ſo important a concern. (4.) That however, Senſibility being but an inferior faculty, this can be a Duty only of a ſubordinate nature, and muſt always give way to the prior Obligations of an higher faculty, Reaſon. So much Happineſs only is to be endeavored after as is conſiſtent with Duty, and Submiſſion to the Will of God. It can never be an ultimate End of rational Beings, for an ultimate End to them, as *rational* Beings, can only be Truth and Reaſonableneſs. Reaſon and Truth can alone be the proper End of rational Beings *as ſuch*, and theſe can never be juſtly conſidered as Objects exciting Happineſs, or ſubſervient

ſervient to the Ends of Pleaſure. (5.) That ſeeing Happineſs is entirely in the free Diſpoſal of God; and We, conſequently, wholly dependent upon Him for it; we muſt endeavor after it by ſuch Means only as He hath appointed. (6.) That the only Means we can conceive God ſhould appoint are,

1. THE Practice of Virtue. And

2. THE due Uſe of ſuch Means as He hath deſigned ſhould be inſtrumental in promoting preſent Happineſs; that is, a prudential Uſe of Ourſelves, our Powers, and Influences.

NOW 1*ſt*, that *Virtue* is the true Ground of Happineſs appears, negatively, becauſe all Guilt is unavoidably attended with Miſery; for no reaſonable Being (his Reaſon neceſſarily paſſing a Judgment) can be Happy in Unreaſonableneſs: and poſitively,

ſitively, becauſe our voluntary Obedience to the Laws of God, is all that we can do to obtain his Favor; is our Higheſt, and a Real Homage. And it muſt be effectual to that Purpoſe; becauſe He cannot but be pleaſed, that They whom he has enabled to tranſgreſs his Laws, ſhould, notwithſtanding, act by the Laws of their Natures. And this is as ſure as the moral Perfections of God.

But *2dly*, A prudential conduct is a means of much preſent Happineſs. It's ſeveral particular *Duties* are; (1.) To keep Innocence: and there can be no Pleaſure greater than, or equal to, this. (2.) To keep a fixt habitual Perſuaſion of God's Government of the world: This leſſens every Evil; and heightens every Enjoyment. (3.) To poſſeſs the full command of our Temper, governing all our Paſſions, and conducting Ourſelves with great Moderation, and Hu-

Humility. (4.) To conform our Lives to our Station and Condition. This is a great Art of Happineſs. (5.) To acquire an Habit of Induſtry in uſeful Employments. (6.) To cultivate in ourſelves a Principle of univerſal Benevolence, which is a ſure ſpring of much Happineſs; as Ill-will is a ſure ground of Wretchedneſs. (7.) To arm ourſelves before-hand with the Conſiderations proper to alleviate the general Calamities of Life; ſuch as Poverty, Diſgrace, Pain, Sickneſs, Melancholy, Sorrow, and Death.

Such ſeem to be the great Outlines of the following Work, tho' but rudely and imperfectly ſketched out. 'Tis hoped however they do not give a falſe, or injurious Repreſentation. They mean here to convey a general Idea of the Plan; and to acquaint the reader with the ſubjects He is about to enter upon. And it may *otherwiſe*, perhaps, be thought not wholly

wholly useless, to have placed in one view these great Truths; and thereby to have shewn, more immediately, their mutual Dependence upon each other; and, consequentially, the importance of some, which men are too apt to consider as of an inferior nature; and to make free with accordingly. No Truth can be indifferent, if for no other reason, yet because every single Truth is connected with all Truth.

BESIDES these particulars already specified, there are many other interesting ones handled by the Author, as they occurred to him; but these need not be here pointed out. To assert the Truth of any particular *Revelation*, lay wholly beyond the Author's purpose in the present undertaking, and this point must rest upon its own proper evidence. But He has clearly shewn the Consistency

of

of ſuch an one as the Chriſtian Revelation, (ſuited to the neceſſities of mankind, and enforcing every moral obligation,) with the Principles here laid down, and eſtabliſhed. The relation God bears to men, as their Governor and Judge, makes any extraordinary diſcovery of his Will and Deſigns reaſonable; and His moral Attributes, and Good-will towards mankind, compared with their corrupt and doubting ſtate, when ſo unaſſiſted, render it at all times credible, that God would interpoſe to ſupply the Defects of his creatures, and to ſupport them; and indeed make it always matter of reaſonable Expectation. But as for the *Manner*, and *Time* of ſuch Revelation, God himſelf can be the only ſufficient Judge. That the Time has been already, and we enjoy the Bleſſings thereof, is a Truth which has been often aſſerted, and proved, by its proper evidence,

to

to the full ſatisfaction of learned, candid, and unprejudiced Men. That there are Difficulties in the particular Explication of ſome of its Doctrines, the different Senſes in which learned men have abounded ſhould ſeem a ſufficient evidence. Whoever helps to clear up theſe, merits the Thanks of all ſincere Chriſtians; and it cannot be doubted but that the Principles here laid down do tend, upon the whole, to ſettle men's wavering Opinions; as well as, in the reſpect we are ſpeaking of, fully to eſtabliſh in the minds of ſuch as are ſincere, the Reaſonableneſs of the general and particular Doctrines of Chriſtianity. And it is moſt devoutly to be wiſhed, that before men ſet themſelves to decide in matters of pure Revelation, they would make themſelves Maſters of the true, enlarged, Principles of Reaſon. It is certain this has often, very often, been neglected; yet con-

fined Principles, no leſs than extravagant ones, may be equally wide of the real Boundaries of Truth, tho' in different extremes. And, after all, ſuch Principles muſt be the Teſt by which its Truth is to be tried, and its Doctrines explained; or at leaſt will be made ſuch, by all ſincere, conſiderate, and liberal-minded men. And it is too plain to be denied, that the Want of ſuch worthy Sentiments of the great Governor of the Univerſe, as men's ſober reaſon might have furniſhed them with; and of ſuch an acquaintance with the everlaſting Principles of Reaſon and Truth, reſpecting moral Conduct, as, by the fair and diligent Uſe of our Underſtandings, might have been obtained, and the wiſeſt amongſt Men have ſeldom miſtaken; that the want of theſe, I ſay, has been the fruitful ſource of thoſe many falſe Doctrines, with which Chriſtianity has been well-

well-nigh overwhelmed; and that even by ſincere Defenders of its Truth; very many undeniable inſtances of ſuch Doctrines might be produced, but it is ſufficient to point out only thoſe two, the Reproach both of Reaſon and Humanity; the Doctrine of Reprobation; and that of the conſiſtency of Perſecution, in matters merely religious, with the undoubted Principles of Chriſtianity. Such has been heretofore the Fact amongſt us; and it may not ſure be thought Preſumption to inquire, whether, both in our beginning, and in purſuing the Study of the ſacred Scriptures, the ſame Want does not ſtill a great deal too much in general prevail; and whether thereby the like Conſequences are not ſtill following upon it. The Principles of any particular Science are firſt to be underſtood, before an intimate Acquaintance with that Science can be gained;

ted; and it would be strange indeed, if the Depths of that Wisdom which is from above, were to be fathomed, without the best Principles of Reason and Knowledge, that God has been pleased to place within our Power.

Charles Plumptre.

Jan. 12, 1750-1.

The

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ERRATA.

Pag. 13. l. ult. *for*; *put*:
——15. l. 12. could ever, *r.* could never.
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——35. l. 16. God; *r.* God;
—— *ib.* l. 17. Will; *r.* Will:
——159. l. 9. in, *r.* to.
——177. l. 1. *r.* cumstances.
——186. l. 2. much, lost *r.* much lost,
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ADVERTISEMENT.

THESE Papers were written in the Year 1728, *and intended by the Author for the Uſe of himſelf, his own Family, and Friends. They are the Reſult of ſome Inquiry, Conſideration and Experience; and may poſſibly afford Aſſiſtance, or at leaſt Amuſement, to ſuch as are diſpoſed to think upon theſe Subjects. With this View they are offered to the Public, and devoted to the Intereſt of Truth and Virtue.*

THE Author is not ſollicitous for Applauſe, and only aims at the Reputation of Integrity and Good-will to Mankind. If theſe Reflections may tend towards ſettling Men's wavering Principles, and compoſing the Mind to a proper Temper, in a State of much Error and Trouble; he will heartily rejoice that he has any way contributed to ſo good a Purpoſe; and he hopes for a favourable Cenſure of his Miſtakes, which are really his own, being biaſſed by no Man, and believing that he has no Zeal but for Truth *and* Liberty, *the only good Things that are worth contending for.*

AN

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5 JY 61

AN

AN INQUIRY

Concerning

VIRTUE and HAPPINESS.

In a Letter to a Friend.

SIR,

IT is not poſſible, that a Man of Leiſure and Thought, eſpecially if he hath any Concern for Truth and Virtue, ſhould be a careleſs Spectator of the different Principles and Practices of Men, in an Age, when almoſt every thing is reckoned worth a curious Examination. I therefore thank you for engaging me by your frequent Requeſts, to lay my Thoughts together, on a Subject that I think truly the moſt important that can employ a reaſonable Mind. If they may prove any Entertainment to you, as you would make me believe, I ſhall be

glad: the real Advantage I have found in drawing them up, and viewing them in all their Evidence, together with the Pleaſure I always have in obeying your Commands, will make me think my Time well beſtowed.

THE Nature of Virtue, and the Rule of Action to rational Minds, which have ſo often been the Subject of our Converſation, do not ſurely require great Depth of Skill to diſcover them. It ſeems to reflect upon our Great Author, and upon the Dignity of a rational Being, to ſuppoſe a Moral Agent at a Loſs for a Rule of Action, or that it does not lye open to an honeſt Mind. In fact, we often ſee very remarkable Integrity in Perſons that do not excel in Underſtanding; who therefore plainly ſee the Difference between Moral Good and Evil, however inaccurate they may be in deſcribing it; the Practice of Virtue depending more upon the Heart, than upon the Underſtanding; which does but too evidently perceive the Truth to be able, by any Pretence of Incapacity, to juſtify the Miſcarriages of Life. And yet learned, and honeſt Men too, ſeem often ſadly in the dark about the *Criterion* of Virtue, and the true Way to Happineſs. This ſurely is the Secret. As nothing is

plainer

plainer on the one hand, than that Learning does not give Men Underſtanding, ſo on the other, it is an Inſtrument by which ignorant, ambitious, and deſigning Men can too eaſily deceive the Underſtandings of the Weak and Indolent, eſpecially if aſſiſted by the ſtrong Inclinations and ungoverned Affections of ſuch ſenſible Beings, who go along with the Stream of Ignorance and Pleaſure that carries away the Generality of Mankind. It ſeems therefore to require little more than a fair Application of the natural Dictates of Reaſon and Conſcience, with Induſtry and Honeſty, together with Freedom from falſe Learning, and Principles taken up from Cuſtom, and Reverence for Perſons and Opinions, to perceive the Truth and Foundation of Moral Action and Virtue, which is the only ſure Way to Happineſs.

ONE particular Source of Miſtake in this matter, I cannot but obſerve, becauſe it has crept into almoſt every Scheme I have met with, ancient or modern; and that is, the confounding theſe two, *Duty* and *Happineſs*, together: Not by ſuppoſing a Regard to Duty the only ſafe Way to Happineſs, which is indeed true and certain; but by making this Regard to Happineſs the Foundation of all Duty; and by ſuppoſing Actions fit and rea-

ſonable, only as they tend to this End. Thus the Law of Reaſon is rendered quite uſeleſs; and that becomes the mere Servant of Appetite, whoſe great Province it ſhould be to controul all Deſire. This Miſtake has let into the Scheme of Virtue, not only Errors but Vices; and helped every unreaſonable View of Men to a fair Excuſe or Juſtification. The old Philoſophers fell into this Confuſion, while they profeſſedly tacked their *Summum Bonum* to Happineſs, and thought *That* and the *Beata Vita* the ſame Purſuit; not diſtinguiſhing Natural from Moral Good and Evil; nor perceiving, that Virtue might ſubſiſt without Happineſs, and Happineſs, in ſome degree, without Virtue; nor that how ſure ſoever ſenſible Beings may be of *final* Happineſs from the moral Perfections of God, yet that the Nature of Virtue does not depend upon that, but is neceſſarily obligatory on all rational Beings, for its own Sake alone. Hence ſome were forced to make virtuous Men inſenſible to Pain, contrary to Nature; others to ſay, that Virtue in Miſery was happier than Vice in Pleaſure, which is abſurd; and too often, for ſome darling natural Good, to allow of the Breach of Virtue or Truth; and laſtly, others, more falſely indeed, tho' more conſiſtently, to ſuppoſe Pleaſure itſelf

to be the *Summum Bonum* of a rational Mind. Whereas all theſe Confuſions and Errors had been avoided, if they had left Moral Good and Evil, Virtue and Vice, to ſtand, as they muſt, upon the Truth and Reaſon of Things alone; and ſuffered Pleaſure to have been a ſubordinate reaſonable Purſuit, and to remain out of the Reach of Creatures, and altogether in the Hands of that Being, who only can and will diſtribute it finally to all ſenſible Beings, in perfect Juſtice, Wiſdom, and Goodneſs. This would not only have ſecured them from Contradiction, but moreover, would have led them, under the unavoidable Pains and Troubles of Life, with greater Certainty, to a better Happineſs than they were aware of, and have laid a rational Foundation for ſuch Expectations after Death, as, in their Darkneſs, the wiſeſt and beſt ſeemed only to wiſh for.

EVERY reaſonable and ſenſible Mind is naturally diſpoſed, and moſt highly obliged, to inquire after a Rule of its Actions, and a Way to its Happineſs. The former, as it is capable of perceiving Truth; and the latter, as it is ſubject to Pleaſure and Pain.

THE proper and immediate Operations of an intelligent Agent ſeem to be the Diſcovery of Truth, and the Practice of Right Reaſon. If it be alſo a ſenſible Being, it muſt needs be concerned to ſecure the proper Happineſs of its Nature.

THE Excellency and Perfection then of ſuch a Being conſiſts, in the due Application of all its Faculties to the Knowledge of Truth, and in regular and conſtant Reſolutions in what appears to be fit and reaſonable: and its Depravation and Deſtruction, on the contrary, in permitting unreaſonable Impreſſions of any kind to prevail againſt Truth and Right.

HAPPINESS is the Gift of God; whether it ariſes from the proper Exerciſe of thoſe Powers he has given to any Being, or be reſerved to his wiſe and equitable Diſtribution in any future Parts of its Duration.

THE Happineſs of any Being is neither more nor leſs than its agreeable Senſations; and therefore, to talk of any Being's Happineſs in the right Uſe of its Powers, and the Practice of Reaſon, unleſs ſuch Uſe and Practice is neceſſarily attended with pleaſing Senſa-

Senſations; or conſtantly and certainly made pleaſant and agreeable by the Will of God, is, I think, unintelligible. There is, no Doubt, a certain Pleaſure, naturally, and in fact, attending the Diſcovery of Truth, and the Practice of Right, in all the rational Minds, of whoſe Pleaſures we have any Idea; and Nothing is more evident than that the Will of God is diſpoſed, ſooner or later, in one Way or other to connect Happineſs with the Practice of Right Reaſon, in all ſenſible and moral Agents; and the Effects of his Will are certain and ſure: but he that looks out for Happineſs as his only Aim and Inquiry; and conſults the Obligations of Truth and Reaſon, no farther than they conduce, or appear to him to conduce, to Happineſs; will fix upon a very obſcure and uncertain Rule of his Duty, as will hereafter appear; and be likely to miſs his proper and higheſt Happineſs. On the contrary; he that duly attends to the Diſcovery of Truth, and ſuch Obligations as he lies under to God and his Fellow-creatures; and is well determined to practiſe his Duty: tho' he does conſult Happineſs in all Caſes where no moral Obligations interfere with it; will have a plain and ſure Rule of his Duty, and moſt effectually provide for his beſt Happineſs: ſince hereby he will ſecure all that Pleaſure which

is the neceſſary or natural Conſequence of the Practice of Reaſon, together with the Favour of God, which will appear to be the only Foundation of Happineſs.

SECTION

SECTION I.

The DESIGN.

SECT. I.

MY Design is, in the shortest Method that I am able, to inquire into the Rule of Action to all rational Beings; and wherein Virtue does properly consist; and on this Foundation, to point out some great Instances of the Duty and Obligation of Man. I will then endeavour to discover the Way to Happiness; and wherein to a rational and sensible Being it does consist; and here also I will take Notice of the great Ingredients of human Happiness.

I SHALL avoid, as far as Truth will permit, all unnecessary Disputations and controverted Opinions; or at least shall not regard them as such: and where I am obliged to take one side of a Question, shall content myself with shewing the Grounds and Reasons of such Decision, without endeavouring to expose any particular Absurdities of other Opinions, much less the ill Management or Partiality of those that have defended

SECT. I. fended them; but shall pursue my own Thread of Reasoning, without interrupting myself, or offending others, by any needless Opposition; being sensible that as Freedom from Prejudice is necessary to discover Truth, so is an Application to the undisturbed Reason of others, the most probable Way of succeeding in the Propagation of it. And to prevent all possible Mistake about the Meaning of some Terms that I have carefully made use of in this Inquiry, it may be proper to fix the precise Ideas that I ever connect them with in arguing.

Definitions. BY *Necessity*, *necessary*, and *necessarily*, I mean, that which does not depend upon the Will of God, but is either absolutely eternal and independent, or the necessary Result of some Existence that He wills to be. By *Nature*, *natural*, and *naturally*, I mean, the mere Effect of the Will of God; except only when I speak of the Nature of Truth, or of any necessary Being or Relation. By *Obligation*, I mean (not in the loose and vulgar Acceptation, the Inducement of Pleasure, or Determent of Pain that attends an Action: In which Sense indeed Civilians and Lawyers generally use it, and whence all human Laws must derive their Force; but in the most just and philosophical

sophical Sense) a Reason for Action, arising necessarily in the Mind of all rational and moral Agents, according to their Capacities, upon Consideration of the true Nature and Circumstances of the Case. This is the only proper Sense of the Word *Obligation*, in a *moral* Consideration, and in which only it can possibly be at all applied to God. Let it also be observed, that when I say any Being is *rational*, I speak only concerning its *Capacities*; when *reasonable*, concerning its *Actions*. SECT. I.

To proceed then: I take the Rule of Duty and the Way to Happiness that all rational Beings should observe, to be founded in the Natures of Things perceived by them, *i. e.* in the Natures and Circumstances of such rational Beings, and of those that they are conscious they depend upon, and necessarily converse with.

HERE let me observe, that tho' the Natures of all created Things do necessarily depend upon the Will of God for their Existence, and all the Circumstances of them; and so all their Relations and Respects towards one another are what He wills to exist, by producing those Natures and Circumstances, from whence they necessarily flow; and so also, that any Beings do exist under the Obligations

SECT. I.

ligations that neceſſarily flow from theſe Relations, is altogether the meer Effect of his Will; I ſay, notwithſtanding all this, the Obligations themſelves are ſtrictly neceſſary, and independent of his Will; even as all natural Truth and Proportion is abſolutely neceſſary, whether any material Objects that have thoſe Relations, or any Beings capable of perceiving and comparing them, do exiſt or not. All things that do or can exiſt, muſt be neceſſarily ſubject to all neceſſary and natural Truth; even as all moral Agents that do or may exiſt, cannot but be ſubject to thoſe neceſſary moral Obligations; that is to ſay, every Creature that is or can be produced, muſt exiſt in ſuch Circumſtances of Truth and Fact, as are neceſſary, or willed by God: as theſe Relations in which it ſtands, to all neceſſary Truth, and to all Beings and Natures, of which it is conſcious, with all its Properties and Capacities, are the neceſſary Reſult of ſuch a Being's Exiſtence. And therefore, all the Obligations that flow from ſuch Relation and Circumſtances, are neceſſary and eternal; tho' the Exiſtence of ſuch Beings is the Effect only of the Will of God: Even as all Truth, which is neceſſary and eternal, is the Foundation of thoſe Obligations to which God himſelf is ſubject, from the neceſſary Nature of all Truth, and from thoſe Relations which neceſſarily

ceſſarily reſult from the Exiſtence of ſuch Beings as he ſees fit to produce. So abſurd is it to ſuppoſe the moral Obligations of reaſonable Beings to be the arbitrary Will of God, who is himſelf neceſſarily obliged to obſerve Truth and Reaſon in all his Actions; and that as much more perfectly and ſtrongly, as he does more perfectly perceive theſe eternal and neceſſary Obligations. But this will be better underſtood hereafter. SECT. I.

It would be an endleſs Work, to enumerate and conſider all theſe Beings, their Circumſtances and Affections; and a needleſs Undertaking, becauſe the moſt conſiderable and obvious will give Light and Direction concerning the reſt; and eſpecially, becauſe a more general Inquiry of this Nature, will probably be ſufficient to direct us to all our Obligations. The Conſideration of the Nature and Perfections of God, of our own Natures and Capacities, and thoſe of our Fellow-creatures, to which our Actions relate, will be all the Guide we ſhall need.

These two Propoſitions, then, I ſhall lay down as *demonſtrably* true. That there is an Eternal, Neceſſary, Independent, Infinite, Unchangeable, Almighty, All-wiſe, and Perfect Moral Agent in the Univerſe, whom we call GOD; and that Man is a dependent moral

SECT. I. moral Agent. Other Particulars concerning the Nature and Perfections of God, as well as the Capacities and Imperfections of Man, together with the Natures and Relations of other Beings which our Actions may concern, will be best considered afterwards: this being enough to lay the Foundation of a general Rule of Action to rational Beings.

Now, tho' I do not intend to mention all the Arguments that are to be brought for the Proof of these Propositions; because I suppose them generally understood and acknowledged; and my main Design is to inquire into the Duties and Obligations of Men deducible from them; yet because they are the Foundation of all my Reasonings, and ought fully to be assented to in order to feel the Force of them; I will endeavour, in few Words, to set them in a clear Light, and shew their great Evidence and Truth.

SECTION

SECTION II.

Of the NATURE *of* GOD.

SECT. II.

Some Being has exiſted from Eternity.

THAT ſome one Being did eternally exiſt, is evident from the preſent Exiſtence of any Being. This only, therefore, I aſſume, that Something does exiſt. Now, if ſome Being does exiſt, it did either eternally exiſt, or was produced by ſome Being that did eternally exiſt. For that which did ever begin to exiſt, muſt in ſome Time not have exiſted, and then it is plain Nothing could never have produced any thing; and conſequently, Nothing could ever have exiſted. But ſomething does exiſt; therefore, ſome one Being, at leaſt, has exiſted from Eternity.

Some Being muſt exiſt neceſſarily.

AGAIN, all Beings that exiſt, do either exiſt neceſſarily, or owe their Exiſtence to ſome Being that does ſo exiſt: To ſay that any thing does exiſt, which is neither neceſſary, nor produced by a Being that is neceſſary; is to ſay, that it does exiſt without any Cauſe or Reaſon of its Exiſtence; which is abſurd. Or, to ſay that a Being may not exiſt

SECT. II.

exiſt neceſſarily, and yet may not be produced by the Will of a neceſſary Being, but be neceſſarily produced, is to aſſert it to be that neceſſary Being; ſince that which is neceſſarily produced by any Being, exiſts by the ſame Neceſſity, by which its Cauſe does exiſt; and can be nothing but a Part, Mode, or Property of that Being which is called its Cauſe. To ſay, that any Being does exiſt, without any Cauſe or Reaſon of its Exiſtence, is as abſurd as it is to aſſert an Effect to be without a Cauſe. The Cauſe may indeed be either voluntary or neceſſary. That is, the Cauſe of the Exiſtence of any Being, may either be the Will of ſome other Being, able to produce it; or the Cauſe or Reaſon of its Exiſtence may be neceſſary, in the very Nature of the Being that does exiſt; and ſo may be a diſtinct Conſideration: tho' in this Caſe, the Cauſe and Effect cannot poſſibly be ſeparated; which is indeed the Nature of all neceſſary Cauſes and Effects, or of all neceſſary Truths, which do all neceſſarily exiſt together, tho' one Truth may be conſidered as the Cauſe, Reaſon, or Foundation of another. The firſt of theſe Cauſes is properly ſtyled the *Author* of the Effect produced, whereas the latter is very improperly ſo called.

Of the different Cauſes of Exiſtence

FROM

SECT. II.

The Cauſe or Reaſon of neceſſary Exiſtence explained

FROM not obſerving this Diſtinction, I imagine, has ariſen that Obſcurity or Contradiction, which ſome have thought there is, in aſſerting, that, tho' ſome Being does exiſt neceſſarily; yet that ſuch Being nevertheleſs does not exiſt without a Cauſe; which they ſuppoſe to be the ſame thing. So indeed it is, if by Cauſe is meant any Being, or Power, diſtinct from the Effect; but if by Cauſe, is meant a Reaſon of its Exiſtence; there is a very great Difference between aſſerting that a Being does neceſſarily exiſt, and that it does exiſt without ſuch a Cauſe or Reaſon, even as great, as between a neceſſary Cauſe or Reaſon, and no Cauſe or Reaſon at all. Every one ſees that it is infinitely abſurd to ſuppoſe that the very Neceſſity of Exiſtence is no Cauſe or Reaſon of Exiſtence; as if becauſe Space and Duration do neceſſarily exiſt, therefore there is no Cauſe or Reaſon of their Exiſtence, or they may poſſibly not exiſt at all. Hence ſome have choſen to aſſert the Firſt Cauſe to be without Cauſe, (meaning voluntary and an Author,) and thereupon to deny the Neceſſity of his Exiſtence; as if Neceſſity was inconſiſtent with exiſting without ſuch a Cauſe; which is ſo far from being true, in this Senſe, that only ſuch a neceſſarily exiſting Being can thus exiſt without Cauſe; tho' to exiſt with-

SECT. II.

out a Cauſe or Reaſon of Exiſtence, is abſurd. Thus by not defining the Words *(without Cauſe)* and uſing them in different and contrary Senſes unwarily, ſome have fallen into ſtrange Abſurdities on this Subject, deducing even the Perfections of God from his Exiſtence without Cauſe, (whereas they really flow from the Nature of his neceſſary Exiſtence,) and have even required the Cauſe of a Defect, that is, of no Effect at all.

God exiſts by a Neceſſity *a priori.*

AND now concerning the Neceſſity *a priori* of the Exiſtence of this Eternal Being, I beg leave to add an Argument or two more than may be abſolutely needful; becauſe it has been denied, or at leaſt not perceived, by ſome learned and thinking Men; and yet ſeems to me of ſo great Importance, as that the whole Foundation of all Truth and Reaſon, in moral Inquiries, depends upon it; and it will be hard to get a juſt Idea of this eternal Cauſe without it; and impoſſible to defend the Exiſtence of God againſt Materialiſts and other ſubtle Oppoſers of true Religion.

THAT which is, muſt have a Reaſon or Cauſe, why it is, rather than is not. All Truth is neceſſary, and ſo are all true Deductions from or Conſequences of Truth. All Subſtances that exiſt, muſt have an Author,

thor, Cauſe or Reaſon of their Exiſtence. Every Being, except one only, may poſſibly have been produced by the Will of ſome firſt Author or Cauſe. That firſt Cauſe or Author could not have been produced by any other, and yet muſt have a Reaſon or Ground of his Exiſtence; otherwiſe it could never have exiſted. The Cauſe therefore of God's Exiſtence muſt be the prior Neceſſity, (not in Time, but in Order of Nature,) of his Exiſtence, as there is a Neceſſity, *a priori*, of all Truth. Thus the Exiſtence of God, (and of God only,) is neceſſary Truth. Space and Duration, which are neceſſary Ideas, are neceſſary Conſequences, and do ſuppoſe the Exiſtence of a neceſſary Subſtance; ſince all Subſtance muſt exiſt with Time and Space. Thus Truths may be deduced from one another, and yet all are equally neceſſary; becauſe all true Conſequences have the ſame Foundation with the Premiſſes on which they ſtand. SECT. II.

THAT Neceſſity, which is the Foundation of the Whole's being equal to all its Parts, and which is alſo the Reaſon or Ground of all Truth, is likewiſe the Cauſe or Reaſon of God's Exiſtence. But becauſe this can be affirmed of the Exiſtence of no other Being, but of God only, therefore Men have found a Difficulty in admitting the divine Exiſtence among neceſſary Truths;

SECT. II. while they clearly perceived the Neceſſity of all abſtract Relations. Whereas the Exiſtence of God partakes of the Nature of all Truth, and is ſtrictly and properly neceſſary.

SOME have thought that they perceived the Neceſſity of the Exiſtence of ſome one Being, to account for the Exiſtence of any thing; and yet, that Neceſſity could not be the Ground or Foundation of the Exiſtence of this firſt Cauſe. But it is plain, that the Neceſſity of God's Exiſtence muſt either ariſe from his exiſting at all, or elſe his Exiſtence muſt be the Effect of that Neceſſity. If the former be true, then all Exiſtence muſt equally infer Neceſſity of Exiſtence; which is abſurd and falſe. Therefore Neceſſity is the Cauſe or Reaſon of God's Exiſtence; or his Exiſtence is a neceſſary Truth *a priori* *.

God's Exiſtence

FROM this Reaſoning it appears, that the Exiſtence of God is neceſſary Fact; which

* This Argument is not brought to prove the Exiſtence of God (which cannot be more certain to us than our own Exiſtence, which the Reality of all Truth alſo ſuppoſes,) but the *Nature* of his Exiſtence, which is neceſſary; and ſo it is a Proof *a priori*, not of the Exiſtence, but of the neceſſary Nature of His Exiſtence, who is the Author or Cauſe of all other Beings. And this

can be asserted of no other Fact. All Relations and Proportions of Ideas perceived by a rational Mind are necessary Truths, arising from the Ideas themselves, which do not depend upon any Fact or Existence in Nature. Whatever is asserted concerning other Facts, is only so far true, as it is certain, that our Perceptions are just, and do not deceive us; but concerning the Fact of God's Existence, we judge as infallibly, as we do of other Truths; this Fact itself being necessary, and as certainly perceived by us as our own Existence.

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a necessary Fact, and the only one.

HENCE, tho' we were deceived and imposed upon in our Perceptions of all other Existences, as some have without Reason imagined, (tho' the bare Possibility of it can hardly be denied,) yet however, the Existence of God is necessary Truth, and relies not upon any external Evidences; but is as certain, as that we perceive at all, or have any Idea of Truth.

SPACE and Duration are not probable,

this Necessity of Existence is the only Foundation of his absolute Perfections: No Argument *a posteriori* being capable of proving, that God is strictly and absolutely eternal, infinite, one, *&c.* only that some one Being of Duration, Capacity, *&c.* sufficient to produce any actual Effect does exist.

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but neceſſary Ideas, ariſing only from God's Exiſtence *.

This the Foundation of the Divine Unity.

AND hence alſo whatſoever does exiſt neceſſarily, or is neceſſary Fact, muſt be that one neceſſary Being we are ſpeaking of, or ſome Mode or Property belonging to him. For whatever is a neceſſary Conſequence of his Exiſtence, who does himſelf neceſſarily exiſt, has the ſame Foundation with his Exiſtence; and Neceſſity cannot be the Ground of the Exiſtence of any two Subſtances that differ, or are diſtinct from each other, but of one and the ſame ſimple Subſtance only †; and this, by the way, is the Foundation of the divine Unity.

God's Exiſtence properly Truth, and an Object of the Underſtanding.

ALL our Knowledge of Nature, (meaning the Works of God, not the Natures of Things,) depends upon our Perceptions of Facts; and is therefore no more certain, than theſe Perceptions are true Repreſentations of what does really exiſt. This is common to all Animals in their ſeveral Degrees of Perception; and I ſee no Reaſon to ſuppoſe a general Deception in this Matter; or that

* Their Ideas are neceſſary to every rational Mind, that is capable of the Idea of any Exiſtence; and being the Ideas of ſomething real and infinite, (for an Idea of an infinite Nothing is impoſſible, and no Idea,) they force

there are not in Nature real Exiſtences that anſwer to theſe Perceptions, more or leſs juſt, clear, or adequate in different Animals. But however, all Reaſoning about natural or moral Truths, with reſpect to Obligation, is independent of the Truth of theſe Perceptions of Facts, (which are yet ſuch as God wills us to have, and therefore to reaſon from,) and ariſe only from the Relations and Proportions of Things; in which we cannot be deceived; and the Exiſtence of God, is neceſſary Fact, and the proper Object of the Underſtanding only; independent of any Senſations, except that only of our own Exiſtence, which is as ſure as that we have any Idea at all. SECT. II.

HENCE, by the way, let it be obſerved, that as the Fact of God's Exiſtence is properly Truth, and an Object of the Underſtanding; ſo there may be Senſations of other Facts, which are Objects only of the Senſes, without a Capacity of *comparing* the Relations and Proportions of Things; or the Knowledge of Truth natural or moral: And ſuch perhaps may be the Senſations of Brutes.

force upon the Mind the Exiſtence of ſome neceſſary, eternal, and infinite Being, whoſe Exiſtence conſtitutes all Space and Duration.

† See Sect. VI. page.

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HENCE also it appears, that the Foundation of all proper and mathematical Truth, as well as of all moral Obligation, is not affected by any Doubts or Difficulties, concerning the Natures of Substances or their Essences; the Proportions and Relations of Things being the same and necessary, as that only necessary Fact the Existence of God is. This Observation may be of Use to us afterwards.

WE have thus an Assurance that there does exist some *eternal* and *necessary* Being.

The Importance of the Argument from necessary Existence.

BEFORE I proceed any farther, I must observe, that this Argument concerning the Necessity of God's Existence is of the last Importance; not only as it is the surest Demonstration of his Being, but also as it is the only Proof of his absolute Perfections *. Thus for Instance, altho' the Author of all Things must indeed eternally have existed; otherwise he could never have existed at all; yet nevertheless, since he did never exist without some Cause or Reason of his Existence, which Cause or Reason being neces-

* See a Pamphlet, entitled, *The Argument* a priori, *concerning the Existence and Perfections of GOD, and its*

ſary, could never *begin* to operate, but muſt have always the ſame Effect throughout all Duration; therefore, God, the Author of all things, who exiſts by this Neceſſity, muſt have eternally exiſted; and *therefore only* muſt continue to exiſt eternally. If he did eternally exiſt without any Cauſe, Reaſon, or Neceſſity, he may at any time ceaſe to exiſt; there being no Foundation of his Exiſtence at all. Thus, altho' the Eternity of God's Exiſtence can never prove the Neceſſity of his Exiſtence, becauſe that only reſpects the Duration, not the Cauſe of his Exiſtence; yet does the Neceſſity of God's Exiſtence moſt evidently prove his Eternity, becauſe this Cauſe or Reaſon of his Exiſtence neceſſarily takes place equally as in all Space, ſo alſo in all Duration. He is therefore properly *eternal*, only becauſe he does neceſſarily exiſt. In like manner, tho' the Author of all things cannot poſſibly depend upon any thing, yet this is only the Negation of his Dependence. Abſolute *Independence* muſt be infinitely removed from Dependence, and, as a poſitive Perfection, can only ariſe from neceſſary Exiſtence.—Again, the Author of all Things

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must indeed exist in all that Space wherein he works; but absolute *Infinity* can only belong to a Being who exists necessarily; the Cause or Reason of whose Existence must equally operate in all Space.—So also his *Unchangeableness* must arise from the Necessity of his Existence: This Cause alone being invariable, whatever is the Effect of Will may alter and change: Necessity only must ever produce the same Effect.—Thus also the *Power* of God can only be proved absolutely infinite, (extending not only to the Things that he has made, but to all possible Things,) by that Necessity which is the Cause of his Existence. Possibility, on any other Foundation, can only be indeterminate; and means no more than when applied to other Beings, *i. e.* that he or they can do what they *can do*, or perhaps only what they *have done*; nay it may not even reach so far; for who shall say, that any Being can now do what it has before done? Its Power may be exhausted or limited. And even with respect to God, if there was no Cause or Reason of his possessing it, He may also by no Cause or Reason lose it; or however we can by no means prove that his Power extends beyond what He has already done. But that Necessity which is the Cause of his Existence must be the Foundation of all

possible

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poſſible Power; ſince no Reaſon can be given why it ſhould be the Cauſe of *any* Power at all, that will not equally reach to *all* poſſible Power: And therefore he is properly and abſolutely *Almighty*.——The ſame Reaſoning will hold for his infinite *Wiſdom*; which, by this Argument, is extended infinitely beyond the Things that He has made, and any Inſtances of it that we can imagine. He is thus neceſſarily wiſe, and thus only his Underſtanding is neceſſarily infinite.——This Obſervation concerning the natural Perfections of God being premiſed, I ſhall only juſt mention them as they are contained in the Propoſition I have laid down.

The natural Attributes of God deduced from his Neceſſity of Exiſtence.

NOW that ſuch a Being is *independent* is evident; becauſe no other Being can exiſt but by his Will, much leſs affect it; and its own Exiſtence is as far removed from Dependence even as Neceſſity, which implies the direct Contrary.

SUCH a Being muſt alſo be *infinite*; becauſe exiſting by the Neceſſity of its Nature, the Ground or Reaſon of his Exiſtence muſt equally operate in all Space, or rather his neceſſary Exiſtence muſt cauſe or conſtitute Space, ſince it is abſurd to ſuppoſe any Space in which a neceſſary Being does not exiſt.

The

SECT. II. The ſame is true of Duration. Both Space and Duration are neceſſarily infinite, and exiſt only as Modes of God's Exiſtence.

HE muſt alſo be *unchangeable*; becauſe the Reaſon of his Exiſtence being always neceſſary and the ſame, there can poſſibly be no Cauſe or Reaſon of any Alteration in Him. The Changes, indeed, of all the Things that he makes, may cauſe a relative Change or Proportion with reſpect to Him, as when He approves or diſlikes, *&c.*

HE muſt be *Almighty*; as Neceſſity is the Foundation of *all* Power; and as there can poſſibly be no Power but from Him; and as therefore, all poſſible Power muſt be in Him, and no Effect can exceed its Cauſe.

HE muſt, laſtly, be *Allwiſe* for the ſame Reaſon; that is, neceſſarily wiſe; Knowledge can only be of Things and Powers, Circumſtances and Affections made by Him, and of all poſſible Things that may be produced by him. All Capacities muſt neceſſarily be his Gift, and He cannot poſſibly produce any thing voluntarily, and not know the whole Nature of it. This leads us naturally to his moral Perfections, which muſt all be founded in his Agency, and are Nothing but the Reſult of his Perfections as a moral Agent.

THERE

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THERE are many Demonſtrations of the *Agency* of God, from the actual Exiſtence or Poſſibility of any Motion, and many other Effects that could not have proceeded from any neceſſary Cauſe that is not an Agent. I ſee and allow the Force of theſe Arguments, but intending only to take Notice of the moſt obvious and clear Evidence I can recollect concerning theſe Things, I ſhall paſs by theſe Proofs, and only inſiſt on this Argument:

THE Exiſtence of any Being, ſeparate and diſtinct from the firſt neceſſarily exiſting Being, is Evidence ſufficient of the *Agency* of that Being: For if any other Being does exiſt, it muſt exiſt neceſſarily, or by the Will of the firſt Cauſe; there is no third Reaſon or Cauſe of Exiſtence. Neceſſity of Exiſtence can poſſibly be the Cauſe only of the Exiſtence of one, and a neceſſary Production differs not (as was obſerved) from its ſuppoſed Cauſe.

NOW that ſome Being diſtinct from the firſt Cauſe does exiſt, is ſo evident, that it needs very little Argument: There are infinite Abſurdities in ſuppoſing all Things that do exiſt to be Part of the ſelf-exiſtent Being. The very Capacity of ſuppoſing it, ſhews the Abſurdity of it. The Suppoſition muſt be

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be made by ſome conſcious Being, who at the ſame time muſt be conſcious of its own Neceſſity, or Dependence. Conſciouſneſs is a ſelf-evident Proof of Individuality. I need not mention the irreſiſtible Evidence that I have of the Exiſtence of ſome other conſcious Being beſides myſelf, (which is not neceſſary, and whoſe diſtinct Exiſtence muſt require the Agency of ſome other Being,) it is impoſſible I ſhould think myſelf either the neceſſarily exiſting Being, or any Part, Mode, or Property of Him; not only becauſe I know I have no Properties of ſuch a Being, but alſo becauſe I am moſt ſenſible that it is impoſſible for me to produce any Being diſtinct from myſelf; tho' at the ſame time I know that ſome other Being does exiſt.

So then, there does exiſt an eternal, neceſſary, independent, infinite, unchangeable, almighty, allwiſe Agent in the Univerſe *. It remains, that I ſhew him to be a perfect moral Agent.

That he is a perfect moral Agent.

BY *moral*, I mean, capable of diſcerning the Natures and Circumſtances, and Relations

* *Intelligence*, which has ſometimes been reckoned a diſtinct Perfection of the Deity, I take to be the Reſult of perfect Knowledge and Agency. For tho' I do not ſee that Intelligence neceſſarily infers Agency, yet it is abſurd to ſuppoſe Agency in any Being, without Conſciouſneſs;

of Things, and the Obligations that do thence ariſe: and as in Creatures this Capacity muſt be limited by many Circumſtances, in God, this Attribute muſt extend, not only to all Things that do exiſt, but to all poſſible Things, as his Knowledge does. I ſhall afterwards ſhew, that this is the true Notion of the Word *moral*, when I come to conſider the Rule of Duty to all rational Beings. In the mean time, if ſuch Obligations do ariſe from ſuch Nature and Circumſtances of Things, they muſt neceſſarily be ſeen by God, who is the Author of all Things, and muſt ſee all Things to be as they really are.

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fect moral Agent,

WHEN I join *perfect*, to the Word *moral*, and apply them to God, I mean, that there can be no poſſible Hindrance to his moral Judgment or Actions in the leaſt Degree. Whereas our Judgments and Powers are neceſſarily and extremely imperfect. The perfect Wiſdom and Power of God, together with his Self-Sufficiency, muſt render all his natural and moral Actions perfect; that is, He wills them to be, and what they ought to be. For there can be no poſſible

ſciouſneſs; and infinitely ſo, when poſſeſſed alſo by Neceſſity of perfect Knowledge: Beſides, the Exiſtence of any intelligent Being, as well as every Mark of Deſign in the Creation, is a Demonſtration that the Cauſe of all Things muſt be intelligent.

Reaſon

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Reaſon why he ſhould ever do that which is unreaſonable, or not do that which is reaſonable; ſince He neceſſarily ſees what is reaſonable, and has all Power in his own Hands, directed by all Knowledge and Wiſdom; and He cannot poſſibly want any thing, or deſire any thing; by reaſon of which Defect and Affections, inferior Beings fall into moral Evils.

And poſſeſſed of all moral Perfections.

GOD, therefore, having never any poſſible Motive (if that Word can at all be properly uſed of God) to Action, but the Reaſon of Action: and it being impoſſible that Reaſon can be both for and againſt any Action, it follows, that God will always do that which is right and fit; not becauſe He has not the natural Power to do otherwiſe; but becauſe He can have no Motive to it, but will always chuſe to act reaſonably. Hence ariſe thoſe Perfections in God which are called *moral*; ſuch as *Juſtice*, *Goodneſs*, *Faithfulneſs*, *Truth*, and the like; by which is meant, *divine Rectitude*, or that Conſtancy and Certainty with which God does invariably act according to Truth and the Reaſon of Things: For if there are not Obligations which ariſe from the Natures and Reaſons of Things, it is abſurd to aſſert any moral Perfections to be in God. We firſt perceive certain Diſpoſitions and Actions

Actions to be morally good, and therefore juſtly attribute them to God. I need not particularly mention the ſeveral moral Perfections of the divine Being, in order to ſhew them to be in God, becauſe they are all and every one, no more than Actions done according to perfect Reaſon and Truth; as moral Virtues in Men are Actions of the like Nature, done according to his imperfect Reaſon and Perception of Truth. SECT. II.

SECTION III.

Of HUMAN AGENCY.

SECT. III.

I HAVE aſſerted, that Man is a dependent moral Agent. That he is dependent, needs no farther Proof; ſince this is common to him with all other actual and poſſible Beings, except only the Supreme.

THAT Man is an Agent, has been moſt unaccountably, ſometimes, denied. I ſhall therefore juſt mention the Evidence of it, that appears to me moſt clear.

HUMAN *Freedom* is the *ſame* thing as human *Agency*. To aſk if a Man be free, being the ſame, as to aſk if he be an Agent.

THE Arguments brought againſt human Agency, do generally conclude againſt the Poſſibility of *any* Agency in the Univerſe. But I have already ſhewn, not only the Poſſibility, but even Neceſſity, of allowing, that God is an Agent, in the true Senſe of that Word; ſo that moſt of the Arguments againſt

againſt human Action are by Conſequence ſhewn to be abſurd; becauſe they prove too much. SECT. III.

BEFORE I proceed to the Arguments that prove the Agency of Man, I would obſerve a neceſſary Diſtinction that ought to be made between *Agency* and *Power*; that is, between a Capacity of willing, and a Capacity of producing the natural Effect willed. This Diſtinction was needleſs to have been obſerved concerning the Agency of God; becauſe his Power being infinite, no Limitation of it could appear to affect his Agency; and therefore, alſo, any Effect produced diſtinct from the firſt Cauſe, proves the Agency of God; becauſe all other Beings can only be the Effect of his Will; but all Creatures being by Neceſſity imperfect, have therefore the Effects of their Agency alſo limited infinitely; and Man particularly, being perhaps of the loweſt Rank of moral Agents, is limited, to ſuch a Degree, as to be capable of producing but few Effects. However, Want of Power does not affect Agency; my Capacity (as an Agent) of willing to walk, for Inſtance, not depending upon my Legs or Strength, or any foreign Aſſiſtance. And this is plain, from the Juſtice of attributing any Action morally to any Agent that willed it to be effected; tho' the Effect followed

Agency and Power in Man diſtinct; their Difference.

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lowed not the Will, thro' Defect of Power; to will (meaning, not the Approbation of the Judgment, but the voluntary Exertion of the Mind) and to act, being the ſame thing. Indeed, the Knowledge of the Want of Power to effect any thing, may prevent my willing or acting; but takes not away my Agency, or natural Capacity of Action; for, my willing to act (or, which I take to be the ſame thing, acting) in that Caſe, only ſhews my Folly, not Want of Agency; as the producing any Effect, in Conſequence perhaps of my willing (or acting) proves my Power, not my Freedom (or Agency.)

FEAR and Danger, eſpecially if the apprehended Evil be very great, will effectually prevent my acting ſo as to bring upon myſelf that Evil: Inſomuch that, in ſome Caſes it has been aſſerted, that it is impoſſible

* This Obſervation may become more evident by conſidering what we ſtrictly and properly call *Action* in a Man. It is plainly not the Power or outward Effect of his Agency; for then taking away another's Life, or murthering him, which are the very ſame Inſtances of Power, or Effects of Agency, would juſtly be deemed the ſame Actions, whereas they truly are not ſo; the one being attended with many very different Circumſtances from the other: ſuch as plainly determine the Actions to be different ones, altho' that which is vulgarly

for a Man to act. But it is plain, the *natural* Capacity of Agency remains the ſame; and tho' it be morally certain, that I *ſhall not* act; I am nevertheleſs *capable* of acting. Juſt as when it is truly ſaid of God that he *cannot* lye, it is not thro' Want of Agency; or as if a Lye was not as eaſily aſſerted as the Truth: but this is only a moral Certainty, or the higheſt Reaſon for concluding, not (ſtrictly ſpeaking) that he *cannot*, but *will not* lye. SECT. III.

IN ſhort, it is evident, that as Power may poſſibly reſide in a Subject that is no Agent; ſo alſo may Agency be in a Subject that has no Power or Capacity of producing any natural Effect. In this Senſe, which is the true and proper one, the Word *Power* is uſed in Phyſics; meaning only the immediate Cauſe of Motion, whether it be original or not; as the Powers of Bodies in Motion, imply no Agency in thoſe Bodies. * On

vulgarly called the Action be the ſame in both Caſes. Thus alſo the ſame outward Action may be either lawful or Adultery, or Fornication, or Inceſt, according to the Circumſtances of it. The true and proper Action therefore, is not the external Effect or Inſtance of Power, but the inward Determination of the Mind in all the Circumſtances of it perceived at that time; this is an Idea very diſtinct from that of Power, and that alone which can juſtly be attributed to the Agent in the Judgment of God, or of any rational Being.

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the other hand, it is plain, that the Agency of any Being, which is a meer Faculty of the Mind, is not deſtroyed by any Obſtruction of its Effects on Bodies. So diſtinct are the Ideas of Agency and Power, and ſo obvious the Difference.

I HAVE been apt to think, that the not attending to this Diſtinction has occaſioned the Confuſion of many in this Argument, both Aſſertors and Deniers of human Agency; and ſome too, of very great and juſt Characters among Philoſophers. This Conſideration will go far in clearing the Proof of Man's Agency.

Man endued with Agency.

NOW it muſt be acknowledged, that if Man was free, he could not have greater Conſciouſneſs of his Agency, than he has; for we ſeem, in all reſpects, to have a Faculty of acting. The few Effects that our Agency is capable of producing, will not prove our Want of Agency; (which does not conſiſt in Power;) but only our Imperfection: any one Inſtance however of Self-Motion in us will prove us to be Agents; of which every Man muſt needs be conſcious.

Agency admits not of Degrees,

AGENCY admits not of Degrees. For tho' a Being may both act and be acted upon, yet this cannot be in the ſame Inſtances. So far

far as any Being acts, he is perfectly free; and so far as he is acted upon, he is no Agent at all. SECT. III.

I THEREFORE conclude, that since Agency is not only possible, but certainly in the Universe; the Experience we have of our own Agency, is little less than a Proof of it; for if the Motion we are able to produce, be not Self-Motion, (and to suppose it the Action of any other Being is a Contradiction,) it must be either the Effect of the Motive or Reason upon which we seem to act, or the Act of some other Being on our Substance. Motives of any kind affect not Agency; if they did, God could not be an Agent at all; since the Reason of Things is to him the strongest Motive, (if Reason may be called a Motive,) that can possibly be supposed. Pleasure and Pain are sensible Motives, and Reason is a moral Motive to Action. Sensible Motives may, to such imperfect Beings as we are, overcome our Reason, and so destroy our moral Motives; but neither kind affects our Agency. God is perfectly impassive, and subject to no sensible Motives, and therefore his Actions are ever moral, and conducted by Truth only. The Kinds of Motives to which Beings are subject, argue only Degrees of Perfection or Imperfection; not of Agency: as the being Nor is affected by Motives of any kind.

SECT. III. ſubject to rational ones only, is therefore the higheſt Perfection. Hence, by the way, the Virtue required in Beings, is according to their Degree of Reaſon or moral Capacity.

REASONS and Motives, moreover are abſtract Notions, and cannot therefore poſſibly produce any Effects. When any Effect ſeems to be produced by certain Apprehenſions of the Mind, as by extreme and ſudden Fear, Joy, Hope, and the like; our *moral* Capacity only, not our natural Agency is affected; tho', becauſe there is generally ſome Degree of moral Senſe attending theſe Affections, ſuch Inſtances have given Ground for obſcure and indiſtinct Reaſoning about them.

Intention neceſſary to all Action.

LET me here farther obſerve, that *Intention* is eſſential to all Action, tho' *Motive* be not. An Action cannot poſſibly be conceived without an *Intention* to act. I cannot be ſaid in any Senſe to ſtrike any one without an *Intention* ſo to do. But it is the *Motive* or Deſign only that I have in ſtriking, which renders the Action *morally* good or evil. The Word *Intention*, is indeed often uſed in both Senſes, and therefore may inſenſibly lead into ſome Confuſion, and prevent our obſerving this Diſtinction: but as there is plainly a Difference between mere natural Action, and moral Action; ſo Intention

tion is evidently eſſential to Action, and Motive or Deſign to moral Action only; and the Nature of the Motive or Deſign will denominate it good or evil.—Not that all Motive or Deſign is moral or rational, tho' no moral Action can be performed without Deſign. Nevertheleſs, Deſigns or Ends of Action are various; and nothing renders a Deſign moral, but the Apprehenſion of right and wrong, Truth and Falſhood in the Mind. This I take to be the juſt Diſtinction between rational Minds and Brutes. The latter are equally capable of many Deſigns, but the former only of rational and moral Deſigns: the Ideas of Truth and Falſhood, right and wrong being eſſential to a moral and rational Mind; as we ſhall ſee more fully afterwards. SECT. III.

I HOPE I ſhall be excuſed this Digreſſion concerning Motives; this Topic being the conſtant Refuge of the Advocates of Neceſſity; and indeed that wherein lies their whole Strength. If a Man once perceives diſtinctly, that Motives affect not Agency, and that the Act of the Mind is diſtinct from the external Effect, which may, or may not follow, (and this I take to be very clear;) it is, I think, afterwards eaſy to ſee thro' the thickeſt of their Arguments. I will only add, that I think much of our Miſtake

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Miſtake about the Force of Motives, ariſes from the falſe Idea which that Sound is uſed to raiſe in us; as if it were ſomething which did in ſome Senſe move us to Action; whereas, in truth, it ſhould be ſtrictly and properly conſidered only as an *End* of Action; and is indeed ſo far from being any *Cauſe* of Action, that it is truly the End alone aimed at by the Agent. The Cauſe of Action is plainly the Will of the Agent, and nothing elſe.

Experience proves human Agency.

BUT to proceed; if, on the other hand *, this Motion that we apprehend to be our own, is really the Act of ſome other Being upon us; it proves however Agency to ſubſiſt in ſome other Being; and ſo to be poſſible; but becauſe we can have no greater Evidence of our own Agency, than the Conſciouſneſs of our own Self-Motion, when it is not only poſſible, but there is no Reaſon to ſuppoſe the contrary; we muſt needs reject the Suppoſition, as contrary to Experience. Indeed if the external Fact, or Effect of our Action, were the Matter in queſtion; it is eaſy to conceive that to be the Action of ſome other Being, as perhaps in truth it is: but I am ſpeaking of the in-

* See p. 39. l. 13.

ternal

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ternal Exertion of the Mind, to which we are plainly conſcious, and which to us ſeems moſt evidently to be Self-Motion, or the Cauſe of Motion in us: that is, our own proper Action. I do not add the Neceſſity of Agency to make us capable of Virtue and Religion, becauſe the Queſtion is only about the Fact, not the Reaſon why it ought ſo to be: tho' it ſeems altogether unreaſonable to think, that God has made ſuch rational and intelligent Beings as Men are, and will from our further Inquiries appear to be, and has not given them Agency, or a Power of uſing to Purpoſe, their moral Judgment and Underſtanding.

That Experience not a Deception.

THE Force of all the Objections againſt human Agency that I have been able to ſee, is reducible to theſe two: the Poſſibility of our being deceived after all our Experience; and the Inconſiſtence of it with God's Foreknowledge. The former holds equally ſtrong againſt all the natural Truths that we are capable of perceiving; ſince all our Faculties may deceive us: but it is not only intirely without any Reaſon or Foundation, which none ever pretended to ſhew, and a bare Suppoſition, but alſo contrary to many of the moral Perfections of God, who cannot poſſibly need thus to deceive his Creatures.

THE

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Human Agency not inconsistent with God's Foreknowledge.

THE latter is only founded on a false or obscure Idea of divine Prescience. The Knowledge of God is infinite, and extends to all Things that can possibly be known; and it is perfect and infallible, knowing all Things to be as they really are. Now the Knowledge of any Truth affects not the Nature of it at all. Necessary Truths cannot be altered by the Knowledge of God; but remain eternal and unchangeable. Natural Effects of natural Causes, or of the Will of God, whether past, present, or to come, are known to God, as the Effects of his own Will. These are not commonly called contingent, because nothing can interrupt the Effects of his Will; tho' they are properly contingent, as having no necessary Cause, and depending altogether upon the Will of God. Other contingent Effects, which depend upon the Will of other Agents that He permits in the Universe, or upon his own particular Interposition, can only be judged of according to the Wisdom or Sagacity of the Being that

* There is, I think, a plain Difference between an *absolute* and *hypothetical* Foreknowledge. The former I take to be proper Foreknowledge, and a divine Attribute: the latter, if not absurd and impossible, is quite unintelligible. To know what will really come to pass in the Universe, that is, what God, or any other Agent by his Permission, will do, is very possible, and seems to be a necessary Capacity of the Deity, however beyond the Reach of our Apprehension: but to know what

judges; which in God being perfect, He judges infallibly concerning them. But whether the Judgment be fallible, or infallible, the Nature of the Action is not affected by it: and tho' this infallible Judgment of God, concerning all contingent Events, infinitely ſurpaſſes our Capacities; yet it is far from appearing to be impoſſible; ſince even we can in ſome Inſtances judge with great Probability; and when the moral Diſpoſitions and natural Powers are known, we can alſo judge infallibly; as concerning any Event, which we know to depend alone on the Promiſe of God; becauſe we know his Power, Wiſdom, and Truth, to be infinite, altho' he be perfectly free*. SECT. III.

ALL the Miſtakes upon this Head have ariſen, from ſuppoſing this Perfection of God to imply ſuch Contradictions as the aſſerting or denying this Attribute does not really concern. As hereupon it is aſked, why God does not prevent the Evil that

what *would* come to paſs, if ſome other Contingency were firſt to come to paſs, ſeems to be a mere Chimera of Imagination, and no Part of real Knowledge; for it ſuppoſes the Uncertainty of one Event, on which the Knowledge of the other depends; and ſo an Ignorance of the principal Contingency, contrary ſurely to abſolute Foreknowledge; and alſo concerning the other Event, a bare Knowledge only of what *may*, not what *will* be; that is, no real Foreknowledge at all.

He

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He foreknows? the Anſwer is plain, becauſe He does foreknow it will be, and therefore it is that He will not prevent it. All ſuch Queſtions may be reduced to their Original, and then the Query will be, why God has made any Beings at all? why any imperfect ones? and why any moral Agents? Indeed the Queſtion of God's Foreknowledge does not affect the Agency of any Being; becauſe all Knowledge ſuppoſes the Thing known to *be*; and all juſt Knowledge, that it is as it is known.

MAN is therefore a dependent Agent. That he is alſo a moral Agent, we ſhall ſee when we have conſidered the Nature of Virtue and the Rule of Action to all rational and moral Agents. I ſhall therefore proceed to this principal Part of my Inquiry.

SECTION

SECTION IV.

Of a rational RULE *of* ACTION.

THE Rule of Duty to all rational Beings, I have ſaid is founded in, and ariſes from, the Nature and Circumſtances of ſuch Beings, and of thoſe that they are conſcious they depend upon, and neceſſarily converſe with. I have inquired into the Nature of God, upon whom all Beings do originally depend. I have ſhewn Man to be a dependent Agent. Other Beings there are upon which Man does alſo ſecondarily depend, and with whom he is converſant: but theſe being either more perfect rational Agents; or ſuch as he is himſelf; or ſenſible Beings; or ſuch as are proper for their Uſes; all which may affect or be affected by him numberleſs Ways, and do therefore conſtitute only particular Duties and Offices according to their reſpective Circumſtances and Relations; I need not ſeparately conſider them, in a general Inquiry after a Rule of Duty. Man himſelf has alſo ſeveral other Powers beſides Agency and Rationality, (which laſt he will appear to have in this Inquiry concerning Reaſon, and the Uſe of it,) yet theſe being ſufficient

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ficient to conſtitute him a moral Agent, I need no more to my preſent Purpoſe, till I come to conſider his particular Obligations.

THERE are alſo many Imperfections that come into the particular Nature of Man, which do not affect the Rule of Duty; (all Beings lying under no further Obligations than their Powers extend to, and therefore all the Duty of a dependent Agent being neceſſarily comprehended in their true and faithful Endeavors,) but are proper to be conſidered, when we come to treat of Happineſs, which is very much affected by them. I have therefore omitted to mention them here. To proceed therefore,

A Perception of Truth eſſential to a moral Agent; a Perception of Happineſs not ſo.

IT is eſſential to a moral Agent, that he be rational or capable of perceiving Truth. Without this Capacity, I think, we can have no Idea of ſuch a Being. Perception of Happineſs, I mean a Capacity of being itſelf happy, cannot be neceſſary to it, much leſs can it be alone ſufficient to conſtitute it a moral Agent. For it muſt be allowed, that a Being may poſſibly perform an Action morally good, which may not affect its own Happineſs, or which has not its own Hap-

* For this Reaſon the wiſe and good Author of our Being has ſet ſuch Bounds to our Knowledge of Truth, and laid us under ſuch unavoidable Ignorance as that Degree

pineſs for its Object, and may therefore poſſibly be a moral Agent without ſuch a Perception. Alſo a Being may be ſenſible of Happineſs in many Inſtances, and capable of purſuing it, without being able at all to diſtinguiſh moral Good and Evil, and therefore a Senſe of Happineſs alone cannot poſſibly conſtitute a moral Agent. But a Capacity of perceiving Truth is eſſential to ſuch a Being. SECT. IV.

BEFORE I proceed, I would here obſerve, that from hence it appears that, a Capacity of perceiving Truth, and a Senſibility of Happineſs, are very diſtinct Things, and may either of them poſſibly reſide in a Being without the other. Perhaps it may be ſaid, that tho' it is very clear that a Capacity of Happineſs does not infer a Capacity of perceiving Truth, yet that the latter does infer the former; becauſe Truth cannot be perceived by any Being that is not happy in that very Perception. I anſwer, firſt, that there are many Truths, the Perception of which ſeems conſtantly, if not naturally, to affect ſenſible Beings with Uneaſineſs; and therefore the bare Perception of Truth is not neceſſarily attended with Happineſs *. But in the next Place, tho' all

Degree of Happineſs which he deſigned for us required. Indeed the Pleaſure which ſeems to attend the mere Perception or Diſcovery of Truth ariſes rather from a Conſciouſneſs

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the rational Beings that we have any Knowledge of, ſeem alſo to be ſenſible, and capable of both Happineſs and Miſery, God only excepted, the Idea of whoſe Senſibility and Happineſs is pretty hard to conceive, yet is there no neceſſary Connection between the Perception of Truth and a Senſe of Happineſs. The former is eſſential and neceſſary to all rational moral Agents, and the latter ſeems to me, an Argument of Imperfection and Dependence, and to be conſtituted and directed by the mere Will of the ſupreme Being. The moral Perfections of God may, and do direct in the Diſtribution of Happineſs and Miſery to other Beings, but cannot influence him in reſpect to his own, becauſe Happineſs is in its own Nature and Idea preferable to Miſery, and no Being can poſſibly refuſe Happineſs, or chuſe Miſery as ſuch,

neſs of having therein attained our End in our Search after it, than in the bare Contemplation; and therefore the actual Attention to any obvious and well known Truth, as that the Parts are equal to the whole, or the like, gives no ſenſible Pleaſure, unleſs it be the Reſult of ſome Inquiry, or is applied as a Medium of arriving at ſome other Truth. And here, by the way, it is very plain that this ſort of Pleaſure can in no wiſe be aſcribed to God, whoſe Perception of Truth is not the Reſult of Inquiry, and whoſe Reaſon proceeds not by Steps, nor ſuppoſes a previous Ignorance, as ours does; but his Knowledge of Truth muſt be univerſal and by immediate Intuition. Let me here further obſerve that moſt of our Pleaſures, ſenſual and intellectual as they are called, are of

which is absurd; and that Happiness *necessarily* attends the moral Rectitude of God, I cannot see. But farther; Perception of natural and moral Truth seems not only distinct from Sensibility of Happiness, as I observed, but also, as the former is both *necessary* and a *Perfection* in God, so does the latter seem not only *not necessary* in God, but an *Imperfection*. When I say that God does perceive all natural and moral Truths, I mean that he perceives *perfectly*, the same Things, and Proportions, and Obligations, that we do *imperfectly* perceive; tho' the Way and Manner of such Perception in God must be infinitely superior to ours, and are not by us to be comprehended: and therefore, tho' we know not what other Word to express that great Perfection in God by, yet are we to suppose the Idea we have annexed to

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Sensibility of Happiness an Imperfection, and not in God; Perception of Truth a Perfection, and in him necessarily in the most perfect Degree.

of this kind, and consist very much in the Consciousness of having attained our Ends; and therefore it is that Enjoyments are apt soon to cease when the Pursuit is over, and the Relish of many Pleasures grows less by a continued Possession. This also seems to be the Reason why the Pleasures of Virtue are more constant and secure than any other. The End, which is only to become reasonable in all our Actions, is always in our Power, and actually obtained in every Practice of Truth, and yet still pursued throughout the whole Course of our Existence. This Connection of Pleasure with the securing of our Ends is our great Incitement to Action, and the natural Reward of all our present Pains and Cares.

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that Word, taken from our own imperfect Way of perceiving Things, to be infinitely below the Truth. However ſuch Knowledge of Things is not only truly aſſerted to be in God, but neceſſarily ſo. The Impreſſions alſo of Pleaſure and Pain are neceſſary Senſations, in thoſe Beings that are capable of ſuch Affections, with Reſpect to them; tho' not neceſſary with reſpect to the Things that produce them, or the Being that cauſes them: And they do alſo affect the moral Agency of any Being, as far only as the Pleaſure and Pain *ſolely* are attended to. I mean that when no other Senſe is in the Mind of the Agent, it does only ſuppoſe natural not moral Agency. We ourſelves are Beings ſubject to the Impreſſions both of Truth, and Happineſs, and therefore while we preſerve the former, are not liable to loſe our moral Senſe by the Force of ſenſible Objects, as we ſeem to do in ſudden and great Paſſions. The Brutes, we have Reaſon to think, are nearly, if not altogether, without the Perception of Truth, or Capacity of Reaſon; and being under the ſole Impreſſions of this Senſe of Happineſs and Miſery, ſeem not to be moral Agents at all. But the pure Capacity of perceiving Truth, or Rationality free from Senſibility, ſeems to me the Perfection of a rational Agent, and therefore I cannot but hum-

humbly propoſe it as the Nature of the Divine Being. SECT. IV.

God muſt indeed perfectly know and be acquainted with the Nature of Happineſs and Miſery, ſince he is the Author of it, tho' he be not affected by it; but ſo he does alſo know the Nature of Matter without being himſelf material. God is ſtrictly and properly impaſſible; which, I think, cannot be ſaid of any Being ſubject to Pleaſure and Pain. A Senſe of Happineſs ſeems often, if not always, in ſome Degree, to affect the moral Capacity. I ſuppoſe all dependent rational Beings to be more or leſs ſubject to Happineſs and Miſery, but in infinite Degrees, and the nearer any Being approaches to Perfection, the leſs ſubject it is to pleaſing or uneaſy Senſations; which ſeem to be a Ballance to the Imperfections of rational Beings, whereby their Actions are proportionably influenced. God has ſo conſtituted Things that, to all rational created Beings, as far as we know, there is generally a Pleaſure attending the Diſcovery of Truth and the Practice of Virtue, as I obſerved; and Pain, on the other Hand, attending the contrary: I ſay he has ſo conſtituted it, *finally*, as in the Reaſon of Things it ought to be; but they are not inſeparable, as the preſent Miſery of the Virtuous, and Happineſs of

Happineſs and Miſery affect not God; nor are they inſeparable from Virtue and Vice. Their Uſe and true Nature.

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the Vicious in the leaſt Degree, as well as the Nature of Things plainly ſhew. And tho' the natural Effects of Virtue and Vice are conſtantly the ſame, where they take Place; and this wrong Diſtribution, as it ſeems, is only in ſome Caſes, and temporal; yet even this could not happen, if Happineſs did neceſſarily attend Virtue, and the contrary. For the natural Laws, which are only the Will of God, may be interrupted, God ſo permitting, yet neceſſary ones are unalterable. The neceſſary Conſequence of acting reaſonably is only being reaſonable; as the neceſſary Effect of acting unreaſonably is only being unreaſonable. The Pleaſure or Pain that ſeems, perhaps, neceſſarily, tho' it is only naturally connected with Virtue and Vice, are only as ſo much Inducement to ſuch imperfect Beings, as we are, to purſue the one, and avoid the other: but God himſelf, who is moſt excellent, is utterly incapable of any Reward, or Acceſſion of Happineſs at all. After all, if any think that a Senſe of Pleaſure is inſeparable from Self-Approbation, I do not deny it, but own I cannot ſee it. Self-Approbation is indeed neceſſary upon virtuous or reaſonable Actions, and is no more than an Aſſent to Truth concerning the Quality of an Action, a Conſciouſneſs of having done right or what is reaſonable; and in Men, is indeed conſtantly attended with

with Pleaſure; and it is a great Support to ſuch imperfect Beings; but that this Senſe of Pleaſure is neceſſary, or a Perfection, as it muſt be if in God, I cannot conceive. Our Pleaſure in Virtue ſeems to ariſe only from a conſcious Excellency of our Natures in thus imitating of God, and our Hopes of his Approbation and Favour; and ſuppoſes ſome ſuperior and excellent Being, worthy of our Imitation, and on whom we depend; all which can have no Place in God himſelf. All the Happineſs that we have any Idea of, ſeems little more than a Freedom from Defects and Imperfections; and I am apt to think, thoſe Philoſophers had ſome Glimmerings of God's Impaſſibility to Happineſs and Miſery, who placed the Happineſs of their Deity in Eaſe and Inactivity; which is plainly no Happineſs at all to a perfect Being, whatever it may be to an imperfect one. And they alſo were not without ſome ſuch Notion, who aſſerted the Happineſs of their wiſe Man, (the moſt excellent Being they could conceive, even, in ſome Inſtances, ſuperior to God himſelf,) under the greateſt real Pains. For what was this but aſſerting an Inſenſibility to Pleaſure and Pain in ſuch a Being? Theſe Errors therefore ſprung from a partial Conſideration of, and wrong Deductions from, ſome obſcure Truths, as moſt mere Errors do.

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And this Notion too has ſome Foundation in that Philoſophy, which makes a Diſtinction between Soul and Spirit; and is not only hinted at, but often ſuppoſed in the beſt Syſtem of Morality that the World ever had. I ſuppoſe they might as well be expreſſed by different Properties of the ſame Subſtance or Mind. By Soul, therefore, I would underſtand a conſcious Principle or Subſtance, ſubject to the Impreſſions of Pleaſure and Pain, whatever other Property it might have: and by Spirit, a conſcious Principle or Subſtance, capable of perceiving Truth, whatever other Property it may have. And thus, I take the human Mind to be endowed with both theſe Properties, and therefore to be both active and paſſible; but the Divine Mind to be a pure Spirit. All that I mean, by this long Digreſſion, is, that the natural and moral Perfections of God ſeem not to include Senſibility to Pleaſure and Pain; and that we can frame no Idea of the Happineſs of God, becauſe all that we can mean by Pleaſure and Pain can have no Place in him. I am far from denying God to be happy; only I think the Excellency of his Nature is ſuch, that we are not capable of knowing wherein his Happineſs does conſiſt. But I return to my Subject, after only obſerving, that from what

what has been ſaid, it appears, that there is no Foundation for Morality in a Senſe of Happineſs, however it be conſidered; and Happineſs itſelf requires a Fitneſs and Reaſon to juſtify a rational Being's Purſuit of it; altho' a proper and reaſonable univerſal Happineſs (of which God only can poſſibly judge) is moſt certainly a fit End; and can never poſſibly interfere with any moral Agent's Obligation; any more than one Truth can contradict another: but in what Degree and Proportion this End is fit to be advanced, ſeems to require alſo infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs to direct. Again, a ſenſible Motive, and a Reaſon for Action, are very diſtinct Conſiderations: the latter only lays an Obligation upon moral Agents; the former is proper only to ſenſible Beings, and to be judged of as reaſonable or otherwiſe by moral and ſenſible Beings. Once more, the Way to Happineſs that any moral Agents can propoſe is only Compliance with their moral Obligations; by which alone they can ſecure the Favour of God, *whoſe mere Gift Happineſs is.* For, if it is neceſſarily connected with no Power we have, and cannot be procured without, much leſs againſt, the Will of God; the Practice of Virtue, which muſt be his Will, is the only ſure Way to obtain it. But of this more hereafter.

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Morality not founded in a Senſe of Happineſs.

WE

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WE have ſeen that it is neceſſary to a moral Agent that he ſhould be capable of perceiving Truth. This Capacity is what I mean by *Reaſon*. The Objects of Senſe are Pleaſure and Pain: the Object of Reaſon is Truth. Whatever other Faculty or Capacity he may have, I think this is all that is *neceſſary* to conſtitute any Agent moral.

Virtue founded in practical Truth, and conſiſts in Action.

THE Nature of Virtue therefore, and the Rule of Action to all moral Agents, muſt be founded in that which is the proper Object of this Capacity; and muſt conſequently be ſome ſort of Truth. And becauſe Virtue can in no Senſe be neceſſary, it being eſſentially free; and no Being is capable of it any farther than it is an Agent; that Truth, which is the Foundation of Virtue, or of a Rule of Action, muſt be ſomething that may be expreſſed by Actions, or to which Actions may be conformable. And here, by the way, it may be noted, that Action is eſſential to Virtue; and no Being can be accounted morally good or virtuous, but ſo far only as it performs morally

* The Exiſtence indeed of all Things does neceſſarily depend upon the Will of God; and in what Way or Manner, as to Pleaſure and Pain, they ſhall affect one another: but then ſo exiſting, their Proportions or right Applications may yet be neceſſary. As for Inſtance, the Exiſtence of a Triangle, or of any Being

good Actions, or practiſes Virtue: a Capacity of Virtue being no more Virtue, than a Capacity of Action is Action; nor can moral Virtue conſiſt in any good Diſpoſition; any farther than as ſuch Diſpoſition is the Effect of certain morally good Actions or Habits, or is actually approved of, or encouraged, by any preſent virtuous Acts in the Mind. SECT. IV.

Truth, its various Senſes.

We uſe the Word *Truth* to expreſs ſeveral different Ideas in the Mind. Sometimes it ſignifies the Natures of all things themſelves, known or unknown; which are properly natural Truths of Exiſtence; or Truths relating to the Exiſtence of Things. Sometimes again it ſignifies the Conformity of our Ideas to the real Natures of Things, in Oppoſition to Chimeras or Fictions. This is the Truth of Ideas, or their Conformity to natural Truths. Again, it ſignifies the Proportions or Relations of Things to one another. Of theſe ſome are neceſſary, and ſome arbitrary or natural, inſtituted by the Will of God *.

ing capable of the Idea, depends upon the Will of God; but the Relations, Properties, or Proportions of it, in Compariſon or Application, are neceſſary; and when truly apprehended by all rational Minds, are at all times the ſame. So alſo certain pleaſant or painful natural Affections of one thing on another, depend upon the

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AGAIN, Truth may relate to Propoſitions laid down or expreſſed by an intelligent Mind; which may be true or falſe, either as they relate to the Natures of Things themſelves, known or unknown to the Mind, and are not dependent upon its Will; or elſe they may be ſo, as they relate to the Apprehenſion of ſuch Being, concerning any Natures or Proportions, and then they are true or falſe Repreſentations of ſuch Apprehenſions, at the Will of the Agent. The former are true or falſe Apprehenſions not voluntary; the latter, true or falſe Declarations intirely voluntary. There are other Ideas perhaps to the Word *Truth*, which are not needful here to be noted, unleſs *moral Truth*, the only Truth we inquire after, may be thought different from any of theſe mentioned: But I cannot ſee that it differs from natural Truth, any otherwiſe, than as the Exiſtence of Things and their Natures differ from their Proportions and proper Applications; and as they are natural Truths, Proportions or Affections, the Application of which, depends on the Will and Power of intelligent moral Agents.

the Natures and Exiſtences of thoſe Things and their Affections, conſtituted by the Will of God; but the Applications of ſuch Things or Affections, by the Will of God, or that of any other moral Being in whoſe Power

Neceſſary Truths are the Foundation of all moral Obligation. Theſe Truths of Exiſtence, as they are the Objects of Senſe, do not concern Morality; as they are the Objects of the Underſtanding, they relate to Virtue. The rational Mind only perceives their Relations and Proportions, and the Obligations that thence ariſe. SECT. IV.

Reaſon what meant by it.

Now *Reaſon* is that Faculty of the Mind, which, I ſuppoſe, differs not from a Capacity of perceiving Truth, by which all true Propoſitions, concerning Natures, Proportions, Relations and Affections, are ſeen or perceived: and this is the Faculty which alone renders any Agent moral; the Perception of Truth, and of moral Obligation being the ſame thing; unleſs any will ſay, that it is one Faculty that perceives one kind of Truth, and a different one that perceives another.

INDEED a Being may be ſubject to many Impreſſions of ſenſible Objects and their Affections, without being able to ſee or deduce any Truths from ſuch Impreſ-

Power they may be, are neceſſarily right or wrong, according to the Being or Circumſtances to which they are applied.

ſions,

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ſions, either natural or moral. And in this Senſe I ſuppoſe the Brutes to be without Reaſon, or any moral Capacity. But a rational Being does not only ſee theſe Objects and their Affections to exiſt; but does alſo deduce certain Propoſitions or Truths, from their Natures or Relations; which are either merely natural, or moral, that is, real Proportions or Relations; or real Obligations to act in ſome certain Manner.

THUS a rational Mind does not only ſee that which is a Part and a whole; but alſo that every whole is equal to all its Parts. And again, it does not only perceive that one Being has, in fact, made another happy; but alſo therefore that the latter ought to acknowledge it, and to aſſiſt the former as it can. It cannot deſire reaſonably a certain Benefit from any Being, without ſeeing it to be fit and reaſonable, to beſtow the ſame Benefit, in a like Circumſtance.

BEINGS that are without any moral Capacities may perceive the former of theſe Objects; but it requires a moral Capacity, or Reaſon, to perceive the latter.

I have us'd the Word *Reaſon* here, I think, in the moſt proper Senſe of it. But all other Senſes of it will come to the ſame Thing; whether

whether it ſignify, as here, the Faculty of perceiving Truth, or the Truth itſelf conſidered as perceived, or the Agreement of any Action or Propoſition to Truth. In either Senſe, Reaſon is or denotes a moral Capacity. SECT. IV.

The Ground of Action, or Obligation, in different Species of Beings.

I cannot ſee any Inducement that a Being can have to act, but either the Reaſonableneſs and Fitneſs of any Action, or the Pleaſure that is ſuppoſed to attend it. The former is proper to all rational moral Agents; and the latter, to all ſenſible Agents, void of any moral Capacity. Let any Agent be ſubject only to the Impreſſions of Pleaſure and Pain from any Objects; and it will always (not neceſſarily, which is abſurd, but certainly) act according to that Impreſſion, either to obtain the one, or avoid the other. Let a Being be capable of perceiving Truth or moral Obligation only, and not ſenſible of Pleaſure and Pain from its Actions; and it will always (not neceſſarily, but certainly) act, according to this Obligation. Again, let any Being be both capable of perceiving Truth or moral Obligations, and alſo ſenſible to Pleaſure and Pain; then ſo far only as it acts from the former Principle, it complies with its moral Obligations; and ſo far as it acts from the latter, without any Perception of its moral Obligation, it acts as all merely ſenſible Agents

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Guilt and Pain in what Cases chosen.

Agents do; and so far as it acts against its moral Obligations perceived, it is far below all mere sensible Agents, and is unreasonable, guilty, and unnatural. Indeed neither natural nor moral Evil can be considered as an Object of Choice: no Agents being capable of preferring Pain or Guilt, as such, to the contrary; but rational and sensible Beings may nevertheless chuse Pleasure, notwithstanding any Guilt that attends it; or to act reasonably, notwithstanding any Pain that attends it; unless the Degree of Guilt be too shocking and greater than their Natures can bear; ~~and~~ and so destroys all Sense of Pleasure in the Action; or in the other Case, the Pain be greater than their Natures can bear; and so destroys all Judgment of Right.

HENCE God may and does move to Action all his sensible Creatures in proportion to their Imperfection, by Objects of Pleasure and Pain; nor do I see any *other* possible Incitement, but Truth; which is more or less the Rule or Reason of Action to all moral Agents in proportion to their Perfection. And there can be no Balance to the Danger of any imperfect moral Being's acting unreasonably, but the Weight of Pleasure and Pain; by which therefore, I suppose, God does secure many Actions of imperfect moral Agents.

AND

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AND here I would obſerve, how much it is in the Power of every imperfect, moral, and ſenſible Being, by the Practice of Virtue, to become vaſtly ſuperior to the common Affections of Senſe; and alſo on the other hand, to ſink far below its nobler Capacities, and even nearly to loſe its moral Judgment and become merely ſenſible, or worſe, and ſo periſh naturally as it were, and deſtroy itſelf, or its nobleſt Powers. And this ſhews the great Caution, with which moral and ſenſible Beings ſhould give Indulgence to the Love of Pleaſure, or to the Fear of Pain; and whatCare they ought to take, as much as poſſible to enjoy Pleaſure with Reaſon and Moderation, and to act herein morally, and in Self-government; that they may ever preſerve the juſt Supremacy of Reaſon.

ONLY let it be remembered, that all ſuch Beings are, by their Natures, obliged to regard Pleaſure and Pain, both as they may affect themſelves, or other ſenſible Beings, by their Actions, as moral Obligations to Action, where no moral Obligations appear to the contrary. And herein they do not act unbecoming of their Natures, or like mere ſenſible Beings; but like rational and moral, as well as ſenſible Agents; ſince they do not blindly purſue Pleaſure and avoid Pain; but morally and rationally; which makes

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the just Difference between them and the Brutes, who pursue the same Objects, but act upon other Principles.

Happiness or Pleasure its Pursuit when and how far reasonable.

THE Pursuit of Pleasure or Happiness is never reasonable, but when our Actions relate to no other Object; and then, is only so far moral as we perceive and intend the Reasonableness and Fitness of them. But future Happiness and the Reward of Virtue, that we expect at the Hands of God, is an End infinitely less dangerous than any present worldly Happiness; or rather is perfectly consistent with the Love of Truth and Practice of Virtue. The Reason is, because we can expect it only, as the Reward of Virtue, and the Gift of God; and it is therefore nothing but the Pursuit of Reason and Truth, and the Favour of that Being, which can be procured no other Way; and so Virtue does secure Happiness; not Happiness, Virtue; as we shall see afterwards. Tho' even in this Case, so far as Happiness alone is regarded, (if indeed it be possible to regard it separately from the Reasonableness of the Pursuit, and from the Reward of Virtue) our Actions cannot strictly be said to be virtuous and moral.

Can never be a

AND this again by the way, shews, that Pleasure and Pain alone cannot be the Principle,

ciple, from which moral Agents ought to act; but the moral Obligation that may be perceived with reſpect to them; and that they can never be Objects of any moral Conſideration; but when Actions relate to them alone. They conſtitute a moral Obligation upon this ſingle Truth, that Pleaſure is preferable to Pain; but are of no Account, when any other moral Truth lays the Obligation. So that Happineſs, private, ſocial, or public, like all other Ends that lie before a rational moral Agent, is to be purſued, when it is reaſonable or fit to purſue it, and not otherwiſe. But it being always reaſonable to purſue it when there is no moral Obligation to the contrary; and it being the only End that mere ſenſible Beings can aim at; and being in its own Nature preferable to Miſery by all moral and ſenſible Beings; ſome have not diſtinguiſhed between purſuing it for its own Sake; and purſuing it becauſe it is reaſonable ſo to do. It ſeems to have ſomething of the Nature of a final, (tho' it is only a ſubordinate,) End; becauſe we may and ought to do many Things for its Sake. But in Truth, the final End of all rational moral Agents can only be, to be reaſonable; and to this End the Purſuit of Happineſs is evidently ſubordinate.

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final but only a ſubordinate End to reaſonable Beings.

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In Morality the Ends and Means are the ſame.

ALL other Ends, except that of Reaſonableneſs, or the Practice of Virtue, are diſtinct from the Means neceſſary to attain them; but in Morality, both End and Means coincide and are the ſame; there being no Way to Virtue, but the Practice of Virtue; nor any End thereby to be propoſed, but Reaſon and Truth. So that moral Obligations differ from all other, in that they reſpect no End; nor admit of any Means; but Conformity to them, is both the End and Means of all reaſonable Beings. To propoſe any End, except Reaſonableneſs, by the Practice of Virtue, is abſurd; becauſe thereby the Action ceaſes to be virtuous, ſo far as that End alone is regarded. To deſign the greateſt Happineſs, without perceiving and conforming to the rational Obligation ſo to do, cannot be virtuous; but what all mere ſenſible Beings are capable of, and conſtantly comply with, according to the Natures of their Senſations. A final End to a reaſonable Being, and a moral Obligation do not differ; and therefore, the proper and reaſonable Happineſs of the Univerſe, could we perceive or effect it, would be a moral Obligation; juſt as Happineſs in any Inſtance ſingly conſidered, and ſeparate from all other Obligations, is morally and reaſonably to be purſued: and therefore, on God who ſees it, and cannot but will the Happineſs of all ſen-

ſenſible Beings, as far as their Natures and Truth will permit, it does lay a moral Obligation; or to him is a reaſonable End, and coincides with moral Truth, as all Truths muſt do: But, if the Happineſs of the Univerſe and every Part of it, were a reaſonable End, for its own Sake and in all Circumſtances, and worthy of God, without any Regard to the moral Fitneſs of it; it would be impoſſible to ſee any Inſtance of Pain or Miſery in it; conſidering the infinite Power, Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God. And after all, Happineſs is in no Senſe neceſſary to any Beings or Actions, as we have ſeen; and is a moſt precarious and uncertain Purſuit, but upon the Principle of ſecuring the Favour of God, the abſolute Diſpoſer of it; which can only be, by acting according to our Natures; that is, according to the Natures of moral Agents; and that is, by acting reaſonably. SECT. IV.

It remains that Reaſon, or the Perception of Truth, is the Principle or Faculty in all rational moral Minds, that is in its own Nature ſupreme and commanding; before which all Means and Ends that a rational Mind is capable of regarding, are to be tried, as reaſonable or unreaſonable; and accordingly to be purſued or avoided.

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FROM what has been advanced, I ſuppoſe it appears that all Men have, more or leſs, this Capacity of perceiving Truth; which I call Reaſon; or however, that they are only ſo far moral Agents, as they have it.

Actions denominated reaſonable muſt be ſo upon the whole.

NOW any Action that is reaſonable, muſt be ſo, all Circumſtances of it being conſidered; ſo that, every moral Agent is to extend its Views, as far as its Capacities will allow, to all the Truths that its Actions can relate to; and the true State and Circumſtance of Things at the Time that any Action is performed, muſt determine the Reaſonableneſs of it. Or, every Action that is morally good or reaſonable, muſt be ſuch, as the true State and Circumſtances of Things, within the View or Knowledge of the Agent, does require.

THE Nature therefore of Virtue, and the Rule of Action to all moral Agents, is a Conformity to all the Natures, Circumſtances and Relations of Things that ſuch Beings can obſerve and affect. I uſe the Word, *can*, becauſe it ſhews the Inſignificancy of all Arguings concerning the different natural Powers of Beings; and becauſe all the Duty of imperfect moral Agents may be juſtly expreſſed by their *faithful Endeavours*; as the Obligations of the moſt perfect Being are de-

determined only by all *poſſible Powers*; which therefore differ not in kind, only in Degree from the former. SECT. IV.

THIS Rule may very properly be ſaid to conſiſt in a Conformity to Truth; and the Nature of virtuous Actions to be their Conformity to Truth; that is, to all Truth, to which they relate: or in other Words, they are ſuch Actions as the Truth of Things requires to be done by moral Agents; or Actions according to, or conformable to Truth. The Rule of Action to moral Agents is Truth; and Virtue is the Conformity of their Actions as far as they can, to that Rule.

IT is a mere Evaſion and Quibble to ſay that a Man equally acts according to Truth, in vicious, as in virtuous Actions, becauſe as many true Propoſitions may be laid down concerning them; as if, becauſe the Action or Fact in all its Circumſtances, is true, or really done, therefore the Action was either morally good or evil: or as if, the very Propoſitions which declare an Action to be vicious, becauſe they are true, declare it therefore to be done according to Truth; all which is infinitely abſurd. The Propoſitions that truly declare the Natures or Relations of Things that Actions may relate to, only ſet forth the *Rule* of Duty; Actions are morally good or evil, as they agree or diſagree to that. In ſhort, vicious Actions are condemned in the Judgment of all rational

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Beings by the true Natures and Circumstances and Relations of Things; and virtuous Actions are approved in the Judgment of such Beings, by such true Natures and Circumstances and Relations of Things. And there is plainly an infinite Difference between an Action's being condemned, and justified by the same true State of the Case.

All rational Agents whatever are obliged by Truth.

TRUTH then is the solid Foundation of all Virtue; and the Rule of Virtue is as plain and certain as Truth. All rational Agents are necessarily under moral Obligations. The Natures and Circumstances and Relations of all Things are their Rule of Judgment. God himself, upon whom all Natures do depend, is yet necessarily obliged, in all his Actions towards them, to regard their Natures, Circumstances and Relations; for since such there are, they are necessarily known to him, however Ignorance may hide them from imperfect Beings, and his Actings are as surely conformable to them, as he is a reasonable Being. Other imperfect rational Beings are obliged in the same Manner according to their Natures.

The Love of Truth, and Practice of Virtue the same

NOW *Reason* is that Principle or Power in all Agents, that makes them capable of moral Actions. The Love of Truth, and the Practice of what Truth, or the true State of Things, requires, is the Idea we have

have of Virtue in any Being. The Perception of Truth is neceſſary to all capable Beings, in their ſeveral Degrees and Proportions; but the Love of it, (I mean, ſeparate from the bare Aſſent) is an Act of the Mind, and differs very little, if at all, from the Practice of Virtue. By Ignorance and habitual Careleſſneſs, we imperfect Beings ſeem to think it one Thing to love Truth, and another to practiſe Virtue; and yet even we, do ever practiſe the one, in Proportion to our real Love of the other; (I mean the Truth to which Actions relate or may agree, tho' the Love of all Truth is very nearly allied;) but in God, we cannot ſeparate the Love and Practice of Truth. He muſt indeed by Neceſſity perceive the Truth, but we can as eaſily ſuppoſe that he will not *practiſe* Truth as that he will not *love* it. Indeed the perfect manner of God's Acts being infinitely above our Comprehenſion, it is hard to uſe proper Terms in ſpeaking of them; yet his moral Actions differ not, as I ſaid before, in their *Natures* from the moral Actions of all other rational Beings, only the Manner and Perfection of them do infinitely excell.

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or in proportion to each other.

In Men, theſe Virtues are better expreſſed by *Conſideration* and *Integrity*. The former is ever in proportion to their Love of Truth; and the latter in Proportion to their Conſtancy and

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and Reſolution in the Practice of Virtue; and both according to their Capacities and Circumſtances. Theſe well expreſs their imperfect Manner, and weak Endeavours in Virtue, and therefore take no Place in God, whoſe divine Reaſon and moral Perfection and Rectitude proceed not by ſuch Steps and Degrees as all inferior Beings are neceſſarily ſubject to.

The Nature of Virtue the ſame in all Beings.

THUS far we have gone in diſcovering the general Rule of Action to all rational Beings, which is a Conformity to the true Natures and Circumſtances of Things; ſo that Virtue, in general, appears to conſiſt in Actions that are agreeable to the Truth of Things, or ſuch as their real Natures and Proportions, in the due Apprehenſion of the Agent, require. The *Nature* of Virtue alters not with the different Perfections of Rational Beings, only the *Perfection* of it. God himſelf is neceſſarily ſubject to theſe eternal and neceſſary Obligations, and his divine Reaſonableneſs, Rectitude, or Perfection of Holineſs, conſiſts in his conſtant and invariable Conformity to this eternal and everlaſting Rule of all right Action. Forgive the low and inadequate Expreſſions of divine Virtue, which muſt neceſſarily be infinitely above any poſſible Capacity of ours to conceive, much more, juſtly to expreſs.

How-

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HOWEVER, it is utterly deſtructive of all the Differences of Things, and of all Truth and Virtue, to ſuppoſe that the Object of Reaſon is one thing in God, and another in Man, (altho' the Way or Manner in which God and other rational Beings perceive Truths may differ infinitely, as do Perfection and Imperfection) and to aſſert that moral Virtues, ſuch as Juſtice, Truth, Mercy, Goodneſs, and the like, are one Thing in Men, and another in God; unleſs we mean to expreſs their different Degrees or Perfections, not their Natures. It is moſt plainly to ſay, that God has no moral Perfections at all; ſince if they are not the ſame to which all rational Beings, in their Proportions, are obliged, they are ſuch as we have no Ideas of, and conſequently cannot poſſibly ſay are in God. And ſo this very high Flight deſtroys the Deſign it intends to eſtabliſh; and is either a plain Denial of all moral Perfections in God; or, which is the ſame Thing, that we know of any that he can have: that is, becauſe we apprehend God to be a *perfect* moral Agent, we deny him to be any moral Agent at all. But the Abſurdity is too evident.

All particular Obligations included in the gene-

GOD therefore, whoſe Wiſdom and Power is bounded by nothing but natural Impoſſibilities, is in all his Actions obliged, by the real Natures and Proportions of all Things. In-

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Inferior rational Beings are under the ſame Obligations ſo far as their Wiſdom and Power, duely attended to, can reach; and ſuch Beings can never act ſuitably to their Natures, or comply with their moral Obligations, without a conſtant Exertion of all their Power, according to their Circumſtances, in the Diſcovery of Truth, (ſuch firſt as moſt concern them, and ſo on) and in the Practice of Virtue; and all the particular Obligations that they are, or can, at any Time, be under, muſt be ſuch as are included by this general Rule; and are *moral Duties* only by Virtue of its Force; and whatſoever is required of them by the Will of God, or any other Being; or by the Proſpect of any Happineſs or Freedom from Pain, can oblige them only, as *rational* Agents, by their lying under this everlaſting Rule of Action; and that which does not oblige them as rational Agents, can be no moral Obligation at all.

General one of acting according to the Natures of Things.

I need not add, that all Virtue is eſſentially *private*, and cannot be the Subject of any Authority whatever. It is directly contrary to Reaſon to act by the Command of another, till it be found reaſonable ſo to do; and then Reaſon and private Judgment become the Rule, and Authority becomes only a Subject of Judgment.

If

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If any think that moral Obligations can be founded on any natural Inſtinct, or *moral Senſe*, as it is called, they muſt diſtinguiſh this Capacity from the Perception of Truth, and from a Senſe of Pleaſure in certain Actions, and the contrary. The former is the Criterion I contend for; the latter, far from being the Rule of Action to moral Agents, is either mere ſenſitive and brutal Appetite, or the Subject of the rational Judgment. Beſides, this moral Senſe is in all rational Beings, neceſſary, or not. If neceſſary, it can be no other than the Reſult of Reaſon; and ſo is that moral Judgment of Truth, by which God and all moral Agents are obliged. If not, then may Virtue be one Thing in God and another in all the rational Beings he has made; nay, moral Good and Evil muſt thus be indifferent, and Names only; and ſo we are inquiring after that which has no real Exiſtence.

Moral Obligation not founded in a moral Senſe.

The *Will of God*, and of any other Being that has a Right to command, as well as a Regard to Happineſs and Averſion to Pain, does lay very high Obligations on rational Minds, in virtue of this firſt, general and eternal Law of Reaſon: but neither any one, nor all of them together, can poſſibly lay any moral Obligation on a rational Being, contrary to or ſeparate from this great Law; any more

In what manner the Will of God, or Happineſs, obliges rational Beings.

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more than the Nature of Truth, or the eternal Differences of Things, or the Rule of everlasting Righteousness, can be altered, by the Prospect of the greatest possible Happiness or Misery, or by the Will of any Being, even that of God himself. The Will of God is necessarily under the Obligations of Truth and Right; and it is as much more certainly determined by them, than the Will of any inferior rational Being, as he is infinitely more perfect than any of his Creatures.

Virtue and Religion, in what Sense different, or the same.

I MIGHT here take notice of the Difference between *Virtue* and *Religion*, which some have thought needful to distinguish. The former is the Practice of Reason, the latter more properly Compliance with the Will of God. But as Religion, in this Sense, would not be Virtue, unless it were reasonable; and as all Beings must be under this Obligation, the Supreme only excepted, and therefore Religion can only mean certain Circumstances or Objects of Virtue, as there are some also peculiarly proper to God only; and as the Practice of Religion therefore is *reasonable*, as well as the Practice of Reason, under the Inspection of our great Judge, *religious*; I chuse here not to distinguish them.

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SECTION V.

Of HUMAN VIRTUE.

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HAVING thus laid down the general Rule of Action to all rational Beings, to which therefore Man is neceſſarily ſubject, ſo far as he is rational, I ſhall now take a View of the particular Duties of Man, and then ſhew how ſome great Inſtances of it ariſe from this general Principle.

The Rule of Action tho' general to all, varies in the particular Applications.

THO' the Nature of Virtue and the Rule of Action, in general, to rational Beings, do not alter with the different Capacities and Perfections of ſuch Beings; yet the particular Inſtances of Virtue, and the Actions that Reaſon and Truth require to be done by any particular moral Agent, depend altogether upon the Powers and Circumſtances of ſuch Agent: that is, tho' every Action that is fit and reaſonable to be done by any one rational Being, would alſo be fit and reaſonable to be done by any other rational Being, in the ſame Circumſtances; yet the Capacities and Circumſtances of all rational Beings, altering according to their different Perfections, the Rule of Action muſt ariſe from the real Cir-

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Circumſtances *they* are in; and therefore, tho' the general Rule be the ſame, yet the particular Obligations of particular Beings, and of Man, muſt be gathered from ſuch Truths of *their* Circumſtances as *their* Actions may at any time relate to. It has been ſufficient, in order to include Man under the general Rule, to make appear his moral Capacity only; but in order to ſhew his particular Obligations, we muſt more fully conſider his Nature and Circumſtances.

IF we would take in every Obligation, actual and poſſible, we muſt conſider every actual and poſſible Circumſtance in which the Agent is, or may be; but my Deſign is only to ſet forth the greateſt and moſt important Obligations of Men, and to ſhew how they ariſe from the general Principle laid down; and therefore it is only needful to remark the greateſt, and moſt obvious, and important Capacities, and Relations of his Nature, and Circumſtances.

THE whole Duty of Man is juſtly divided into the Obligations he lies under to God, to his Fellow-Creatures, and to Himſelf; and therefore the more general and important Truths relating to the Natures and Circumſtances of all theſe Beings, to which he is related,

lated, must be considered, in order to discover his general Obligations. SECT. V.

Indifferent Actions, what.

HERE let me observe, by the way, that all Actions that do no way relate to any rational or sensible Beings, if such there are, can in no Sense be moral, but are perfectly *indifferent*. I do not mean, that no Actions are moral but such as respect Pleasure and Pain: This would destroy all Obligations from the Considerations of the divine Nature, which can no way be affected by us; and all that relate to our Fellow-Creatures that do not affect their Happiness, which are very many; and also many Duties we owe ourselves, separate from any Self-Interest. Besides that with regard to Pleasure itself, Actions are not *moral*, only as they respect *it*; for then to give Pleasure would be always right and reasonable, whereas not the Application of Pleasure and Pain according to *their* Natures only, is morally fit or reasonable, but the *right* Application of them, as Things and Circumstances do in Reason require. What I mean is, that all material and insensible Things can only reasonably be regarded in our Actions, according to their Uses, and proper Applications to rational and sensible Beings.

Many Instances of Duty

THE different Circumstances of Actions and their Degrees of Importance are infinite;

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wholly disinterested.

and tho' the moral Obligations in many Actions are very small and few, yet whether in any Instance they are none, or quite inconsiderable, I very much question. However, all rational Beings are, in all Cases, to act reasonably, so far as they can discern any moral Obligations, or Truths that require to be observed. Many Actions are fit to be done, whose moral Obligations are far removed from any Consideration of Benefit or Advantage to any Part of the Universe, and are, in themselves alone, reasonable, and fit for moral Agents to perform. Such are all proper Instances of Duty towards God; who is never supposed to be interested in our Services. And altho' our own Pleasure or Advantage may be found in them, according to the kind Constitution of God, yet these are not the *Grounds* or *Objects* of our right Action in these Instances. Such also are many Duties we owe to one another; as *Gratitude*, where we have no Capacity of returning Favours, or even of acknowledging them; yet this Sense of Mind is our Duty: so is *Esteem* and *Respect* towards good and great Men, altho' our Actions may never affect them. Other Instances might be mentioned; and altho', according to the good Pleasure of God, the right Distribution of Happiness makes up the most of our Duty to Men, yet that is, strictly speaking, only the *Subject* of our right Action, not the immediate

mediate *Object* of it; which can only be the Reaſonableneſs of ſuch Diſtribution, as appears plainly, in that our Obligations to promote every one's Happineſs differ in themſelves. Inſtances of this kind, reſpecting our Duty towards ourſelves, are the feweſt and moſt difficult to diſtinguiſh. And herein, by the way, appears the great Bounty of our Creator, in making our Duty towards ourſelves, in which we have the moſt to do, ſo much our Intereſt: and yet even here, ſome Inſtances are obvious to a careful Obſerver. Such I take all Duties of *Self-denial*, and Improvements of our rational Powers to be: for do they not conſiſt in wiſe and juſt Abſtinences from many Inſtances and Degrees of Pleaſure, which is our own immediate Happineſs; and a Choice of rational Conduct, diſtinct from, and ſometimes in Oppoſition to, Pleaſure? And altho' herein we may be ſaid to prefer rational Pleaſures, and do indeed beſt ſecure our Reliſh of ſenſual ones; nevertheleſs it cannot be ſaid that Pleaſure is our *Object*, or even *Subject* of Action; ſince our Aim is only the Reaſonableneſs of ſuch Conduct, and the Improvement of our rational Faculties; which, if allowed to be Pleaſures, are quite different from ſenſual ones, or rather in kind above them; and the natural Conſtitution of God, neceſſary indeed to the real Happineſs of ſuch Beings as we are. But

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the great Difficulty is, how to judge and act in Cases, where moral Obligations and the Interests of Pleasure and Pain are mixed, and contradict one another. I take the moral Obligations to be plain, however hard it may be in some Circumstances to comply with them.

Interest or Happiness, in what Cases it lays an Obligation;

IN the first Place, a Regard to Interest, Pleasure or Pain, lays no moral Obligation, but where Actions relate to them only; in which Case the greatest Happiness is ever reasonable to be chosen; and where Happinesses interfere, the greater is to be taken; as of Pains, the less. And since they may interfere, and so create an Obligation contrary ways, if *they* were the Ground of Obligation, (which is absurd, and cannot be said of Reason and Truth, which are ever on one Side of an Action only;) hence the Absurdity of making them the Foundations of Virtue, or a Rule of Action, is very observable.

can never alter the Obligation of Reason, and must be subordinate to it.

AGAIN, where Truth and Reason require certain Actions, no Interest of Pleasure or Pain can alter the Obligation, or be of any Force at all; since in that Case, a less Pleasure, or even Pain is to be chosen, (not indeed for its own Sake, which is absurd, but) for the Sake of Virtue, Reason, or Truth, which

which moral and rational Beings are obliged always to obſerve. SECT. V.

WE may ſee this very plainly in an Inſtance. If the Reaſon that I have for doing any certain Action be only ſome evident Advantage, the interfering of ſome greater Intereſt, or Pleaſure, or Pain, is a good Reaſon for acting otherwiſe. But if my Reaſon for acting thus be ſome moral Fitneſs, or Truths in the Nature of Things, or ſome lawful Authority, not affected by the Intervention of Pleaſure or Pain; the Obligation remains the ſame, whatever I loſe or ſuffer; and ſo does the Reaſonableneſs of the Action. Again, tho' I would not do any certain Action, becauſe of ſome Pain or Uneaſineſs attending it, but for the Sake of ſome greater Pleaſure, or the avoiding ſome greater Pain, by doing it; this may juſtify the Action; yet if I would not do an Action, becauſe it was abſolutely unfit to be done, or forbidden by any lawful Authority, no Pleaſure or Pain ought to induce me to do it; I ſay, *ought*, becauſe no Weakneſs of any rational Being will juſtify, however it may excuſe it, before a merciful as well as righteous Judge. Honeſt and ſincere Men do right or virtuous Actions, thro' a Conſcience of their Duty, whether Pleaſure or Pain attend ſuch Practice. And tho' they may not be able to diſtinguiſh

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nicely, or expreſs their Senſe exactly, they ſee nevertheleſs this Law of Nature and Truth plainly, and conſtantly obſerve it: and they feel the Force of it moſt of all, when it moſt of all oppoſes their Inclinations. So little do *they* imagine Pleaſure to be the Rule of Virtue.

THIS then ſeems to be the Caſe: Moral Obligations never do or can interfere, but moral Obligations and Happineſs may. The former cannot give way without Guilt, tho' the latter may and ought. Let it alſo be added, that the Breach of moral Obligation cannot be repaired or undone, but the Neglect of Happineſs in theſe Caſes, both can and will be made up to the Practiſers of Virtue, by the great Author of Happineſs, and moral Governor of the Univerſe: Not to ſay how eaſily we miſtake our Pleaſures and Pains. Hence it is, that the Obligation to the Practice of Virtue, when ſuch Practice would, as it ſeems, ſurely bring Miſery to the Agent, would be an abſurd Conſtitution of Things, if there were not a moral Governor of the World, upon whom virtuous Beings might depend for Happineſs in the Practice of Virtue. So that either all moral and virtuous Beings muſt be inſenſible to Pleaſure and Pain, or Pleaſure muſt always in all Circumſtances have attended Virtue, neither

of

of which is true in Fact; or elſe (which is the Truth) there muſt be a moral Governor of the Univerſe. SECT. V.

BEFORE I proceed to the particular Inſtances of human Duty, I ſhould obſerve, that *Omiſſions*, ſeen and intended by the Mind, differ not from Actions, and require juſt the ſame Capacities, and moral Perception, and Agency, that poſitive Actions do. And Obligations to omit certain Actions, that do not lye before the Mind, can poſſibly no otherwiſe bind any Being, than to ſee and obſerve them, according to its Capacities and Circumſtances. Only it is always in our Power not to do, what we ſee we ought not to do, tho' not always to ſee all the Truths and Relations that would oblige us to act, or not to act. So little ground is there to cenſure Man's Omiſſions, Actions, and Principles, in many Caſes. Omiſſions intended have the Nature of moral Actions.

THE Practice of Virtue therefore conſiſts in, the actual Regard that the Mind pays to Truth, that is, the real Circumſtances and Relations of Things in which it ſtands. Or Virtue is, the Practice of Reaſon in its juſt Extent, according to the Capacities and Circumſtances of any Being. Therefore God, whoſe Wiſdom is perfect, and whoſe Power is infinite, is obliged by the eternal and neceſſary Virtue what in itſelf, and reſpecting Man.

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ceſſary Relations of all things, to ſuch Actions as the real Natures of all things do require. No Defect of Knowledge can bound his Conſcience of Right, or require his Search after Truth; and no Limitation of his Power can prevent the Effect of what he wills. The Rule is the ſame to all imperfect moral Agents, and in particular to Man. But his Knowledge and Power being greatly bounded, his particular Obligations are thence alſo limited. His imperfect Knowledge admits of Increaſe, and requires conſtant Search after Truth, according to his Circumſtances; and his limited Power reduces his Obligation to the actual Practice of Virtue, to that of his faithful Endeavours.

Reſpects Principles and Practice.

VIRTUE therefore in Man may be conſidered either as reſpecting his Principles, or the Conformity of his Behaviour to them. The Virtue reſpecting his Principles, can only be meaſured by that actual and voluntary Love of Truth, and faithful Induſtry of Inquiry with which thoſe Principles are embraced:

* It is very obſervable, eſpecially in Men that think little, how evidently Integrity conſiſts, not in being in the Right, but in doing that which ſeems to the Mind to be ſo: inſomuch that it is hard to ſay what Principle of Truth is ſo plain and evident, as not to be capable of being ſincerely rejected by ſuch ſhort-ſighted Beings as we are. Of all moral Obligations, that of doing as we think it

and the Virtue reſpecting his Behaviour, by the conſtant and uniform Endeavour with which he conforms to the Dictates of his Conſcience, according to his Powers, Aſſiſtances, and Oppoſitions *. SECT. V.

VIRTUE is eſſentially *active*, as has been before obſerved, and therefore the Diſtinction between Principles and Practice muſt be underſtood accordingly. The Obligation to any virtuous Practice ariſes from the Senſe of moral Good or Evil, Right or Wrong, at the Time of Action, in the Mind of the Agent; and the Obligation to any Principle or due Apprehenſion of Truth ariſes alſo from the Senſe of moral Good and Evil reſpecting the Principle, or that Love of, and Attention to, Truth, which the Mind perceives it ought at any Time to exert. So that we are obliged to perform thoſe Actions, and alſo to exert that Attention to Truth, which our Conſcience informs us is our Duty in any Circumſtance. And hence we are chargeable with the Neglect of thoſe Actions, and alſo with

This in what Senſe to be underſtood.

* it reaſonable to be done by, and in Conſequence of freely allowing others to judge for themſelves, as we think we have a Right to do, ſeems to be the moſt obvious to every Capacity. And yet how often, not to ſay generally, has Perſecution in ſome Kind or Degree prevailed, and been defended too, by all Parties and Profeſſions, and that alſo by wiſe and virtuous Men among them.

that

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that Neglect of Attention, which our Conſcience did require; not with the Neglect of thoſe Actions which we ought to have known to have been our Duty, as is commonly by Miſtake affirmed; for we cannot be obliged to attend, and alſo to act in Purſuance of that Attention, at the ſame Inſtant. The true Circumſtances of Things therefore in which we are, together with our Conſcience of Right and Wrong, is ever the Rule of our moral Action.

The Merit of right Opinion what.

HENCE it follows, that there can be no Merit in right Opinion, Aſſent to Truth, or what is called Orthodoxy, but only in the Degree of Virtue with which Truth, or perhaps Error, is embraced; ſo little Reaſon is there for perſecuting thoſe that we think are in the wrong: and alſo that Actions cannot be materially Good or Bad, but only as they are conformable or contrary to the Dictates of the Conſcience: and further, that all Virtue is eſſentially private, and an internal Act of the Mind. The actual Love of Truth is the only virtuous Principle, and Obedience to Conſcience is the only virtuous Practice. In God, his perfect Nature excludes all need of Endeavour; in all imperfect Beings, faithful Endeavour is the Perfection of their Virtue.

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SECTION VI.

Concerning GOD.

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I SHALL now consider some of the most important moral Obligations of Man, with Respect to God, in the first Place; and therefore it will be necessary to shew some farther Particulars, of the Nature, and Perfections, and Relations of God; and some farther Capacities and Relations of Man, from whence these Obligations flow.

Now concerning God, besides that he is, as has been shewn, an eternal, necessary, independent, infinite, unchangeable, almighty, allwise, and perfect moral Agent; he is also to be considered in these several following Respects.

God exists in all Respects in the most perfect Manner.

FIRST, as existing in the best possible Manner, and having all natural and moral Perfections. Thus he is the most excellent of all possible Beings, to be compared to none. There is no Nature that he does not infinitely excell, in its highest Capacity. When therefore I do suppose God not sensible to Pleasure or Pain, it is because I suppose his Nature infinitely superior to such Affections;

SECT. VI. tions; not wanting Happineſs, but altogether above it: that he is this moſt excellent Being is evident, becauſe he is the Author of all real and poſſible Excellence; and Neceſſity of Exiſtence cannot ſuppoſe any poſſible Defect. And in this beſt Manner he does exiſt infinitely, which leads me to obſerve,

Is but One.

AGAIN, that He is but One, He does (as is moſt beautifully expreſſed) exhauſt, as it were, all this beſt Manner of exiſting. To ſay any other does ſo exiſt, is to deny his Infinity. Two infinite Beings of the ſame Nature being impoſſible, as two infinite Spaces, or two Eternities which is abſurd. If both are infinite, they muſt either be of the ſame Nature, or Eſſence; and ſo muſt coincide; or of contrary Natures, and ſo deſtroy each other, as Negative and Affirmative; or of different Natures, and then neither would be perfect, but each want what the other had, and there would be a Genus or ſuppoſable Nature ſuperior to either of them. Indeed if this one Being did not exiſt by the Neceſſity of his Nature, the Unity of God could not be demonſtrated: for however neceſſary the Exiſtence of ſome One Being is, to the Production of thoſe Things which do exiſt; yet is there no Abſurdity in ſuppoſing more than One to have been the Authors of them, each of his own ſeparate and independent Part;

Part: but Neceſſity of Exiſtence, inferring neceſſarily Infinity and Eternity, is demonſtrably the Foundation of one only ſupream Cauſe, Author and Diſpoſer of all Things. SECT VI.

AGAIN, God muſt be a Spirit, or an immaterial Subſtance. I mean, that none of the Properties of Matter can be aſcribed to God. They are evidently Marks of Imperfection. Diviſibility, Extenſion, Solidity, all contradict his Infinity. I do not mean to ſay, that God is ſuch a Spirit as we are, or that his Subſtance is at all to be conceived by us. There are doubtleſs infinite Degrees of Excellency in immaterial Subſtances; and God muſt neceſſarily excell all poſſible Productions of his Will, as in all other Perfections, ſo alſo, in that of his Subſtance. We know very little of Subſtance in general; only this we may affirm; that no Subſtance whoſe Properties are imperfect, can belong to God, and therefore that Matter cannot. I purpoſely paſs by many Arguments that might be brought to prove my Aſſertions. If they do but appear clear from what I obſerve, it is all I intend. Is immaterial.

AGAIN, the ſupreme Being muſt be the conſtant Director and Diſpoſer of all Things: Or there muſt be an univerſal Providence exerciſed by God. He is neceſſarily preſent every The univerſal Governor.

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every where; without which indeed he could not act immediately; and ſuch neceſſary Inſtrumentality as his Abſence would ſuppoſe is contrary to his Perfection. He muſt know all Things and their Circumſtances. Add to this his almighty Power, by which all Things are equally eaſy to him and intirely free from any poſſible Difficulty. And farther, the Dependence of all Beings could not be abſolute and conſtant upon him, if he could not always himſelf interpoſe as Reaſon did require. In him therefore ſtrictly, all Things live, and move, and have their Being.

General Methods by which Providence may, and probably does, interpoſe in the Affairs of the World.

THE only Queſtion is, how far this Providence does extend, and how far Beings are left to the Laws of their Natures. Now it is plain, that all the Parts of the Univerſe, that are not themſelves Agents, are, ſo far as they are not ſubject to the Agency of other Beings, acted upon by him alone. That is, their Natures and Properties are no other than the Effects of his Will; and theſe cannot be altered, only applied and uſed by other Agents. All natural Agents, that are only ſubject to the Impreſſions of Pleaſure and Pain, can only be affected by ſuch Motives; and by theſe God is ever able to ſecure, not the Neceſſity, which is abſurd, but the Certainty of their Actions. The Actions of moral Agents may be ſecured according to their Per-

Perfections or Imperfections, by ſuch rational Conſiderations, or Proſpects of Happineſs or Miſery as are at any Time needful; Reaſon determining them in Proportion to their Virtue, and Pleaſure and Pain in Proportion to their Senſibility; which may, I doubt not, be increaſed to the Deſtruction of all moral Agency in imperfect Beings. By theſe Means it is moſt evidently in the Power of God to controul all Natures and Actions in the Univerſe; not to mention the Creation or Annihilation of any Beings, to any Purpoſe. Now, how far God *does* thus interpoſe, to alter the Courſe of Nature, as it is called, and ſo lay the Reaſons and Motives before different Agents, and to create, or take away any Beings, is indeed impoſſible to be ſaid. And as it is impoſſible, ſo is it of no Manner of Importance to us; ſince it is enough, to all the Purpoſes of our Dependence and Truſt, that he can always interpoſe, and that he does too, whenever his own perfect Wiſdom and Goodneſs, or the Occaſions or Happineſs of any Part of the Univerſe do properly require it; eſpecially when we conſider the many Witneſſes we have of his conſtant and general Care, ſo far as our Knowledge and narrow Sphere reaches; and ſome very particular and extraordinary Inſtances of his more immediate Concern for our World and State. The Ways and

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and Manners in which perfect Wisdom and Power may bring about certain Actions and Events, even of free Beings, must necessarily be infinite; and how far the constant Laws of Nature, the natural, virtuous, and vicious Actions of Beings, may, by the Contrivance of an infinitely perfect Designer, answer the natural and judicial Expectations of all intelligent Beings, is impossible to conceive. However, there being surely a Power able at all Times, and in all Circumstances, to interpose, the Will of God must ever necessarily take Place, according to infinite Wisdom and Goodness; and there is no possible Case in which a rational Trust can fail.

God is the most perfect and unalienable Proprietor of all Things;

AGAIN, God must needs be considered as an universal and rightful Governor of all Beings. All things that do exist belong to God, as they are the mere Productions of his Will; so that it is not possible for him to part with his sole Right and Property in them; as all Creatures may, so far as they are capable of any Right, in most Particulars, to one another. The Truth is, God has an original and unalienable Right to all Things, and can only grant the Use of any Thing, or lend it to any Being, for so long a Time as he thinks fit; the sole Property always necessarily remaining in him. Thus all that we do, or can call our own, is nothing but the

Use

Uſe or Employment of it, till ſome other Being, by Nature, Gift, or Law, ſucceeds to it, or till God himſelf reſumes it. So neceſſarily are all our Powers and Poſſeſſions only Talents entruſted to our Care. But the Right that God has to all Things is neceſſary, and unalienable. For the ſame Reaſon, his Will is ſupreme in the Univerſe; and as it cannot be controuled, ſo it ought ever to be obeyed. The inanimate Part of the Creation is neceſſarily what he wills it to be. All mere ſenſible Agents, do invariably act according to the Laws of their Natures, and obey, if I may ſo ſay, the immediate Senſations they are under. Moral Agents only can properly diſobey the Laws of their Natures, and ſuch Powers as may be abuſed, are eſſential to ſuch Beings. Naturally indeed, they can no more reſiſt the Will of God, than any other Part of the Creation. The Will of God, or the Effects of his Will, muſt inevitably take Place, whether, in Conſequence of it, moral Beings are approved, or condemned; but what he wills them to do, or wills to be their Duty, muſt of Neceſſity be in *their* Power, or ſubject to *their* Agency, and muſt conſequently depend on *them* only. His Supremacy conſiſts, as in the other Part of the Creation, in bringing to paſs what he wills, ſo here, in preſcribing the Rule of Action to all moral Agents. This he does,

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and poſſeſſed of the fulleſt Supremacy over them;

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by creating the ſeveral Natures, Properties, and Affections of Things, from whence, as has been ſhewn, their Obligations neceſſarily ariſe; or by interpoſing by any other Signification of his Will, which cannot contradict the former Obligations, tho' it may, by virtue of them, lay new and different ones. God cannot alter any eternal and neceſſary Obligations that moral Agents lie under; ſince theſe do equally or more ſtrongly bind God himſelf; but in all other Caſes, he may diſpoſe of his own, which is the Univerſe, and require what Actions he pleaſes of any moral Agent. So that all Beings are by Nature and Neceſſity ſubject to him; and his Will always does and ought to take place; ſince there can be no poſſible Exception, but where he cannot will or command; which is only in all natural and moral Impoſſibilities. The whole natural and ſenſible World is not more neceſſarily ſubject to him, than the whole moral World ought freely and rationally to be; ſince the Effects and Actions of the one are not more neceſſary and certain, than the Obligations and Duty of the other. This is plainly the moſt neceſſary and abſolute Supremacy that can poſſibly be; and it is, and can be in God only.

and the Judge of all moral

ONCE more; we are naturally led in our Apprehenſions of God, to conſider him under

der the Character of a Judge over the Actions of such Beings as are, by their Natures, accountable. That he knows and is acquainted with all Things and Actions is most evident. That he does approve and disapprove of certain Actions, is as sure as that there is any Difference in Things, or Actions that are morally good and evil, right or wrong, fit or unfit, reasonable or unreasonable. This is clear. Now all Natures and natural Actions, he cannot but approve, as they are no other than what he wills to be; therefore they are naturally good; their Goodness consisting only in being what he wills. But these are for that very Reason neither Good nor Evil in those Beings, in a moral Sense, and therefore not subject to any such Approbation or Dislike as is proper to virtuous and vicious Actions. Such Beings alone, as are capable of these Actions, can be the Subject of God's moral Judgment; and such they must be, since he cannot but know the Nature and Circumstances of all Beings, and their Actions; and cannot but approve, or dislike their Actions, according to the true Natures of them. And that also must be according to their Appearance in the Mind of that conscious Being, that performs them, when duely considered; because this constitutes the Obligation of such Being; and God sees all Things as they really are. I think too, that the Fa-

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Actions, which alone are properly the Objects of his Approbation or Displeasure.

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vour or Diſpleaſure of God towards the Authors of theſe Actions, muſt follow ſuch Approbation or Diſlike; ſince virtuous Actions are ſtrict Obedience to his Will, Images of his own perfect Rectitude, and the only poſſible Way to his Favour; and vicious ones are, on the other Hand, ſtrict Diſobedience, contrary to his Rectitude, and the only poſſible Means of incurring his Anger. For if there is any ſuch Thing as the Favour or Diſpleaſure of God, Goodwill or Reſentment; if there be any Merit or Demerit in his Sight; it muſt belong to ſuch virtuous or vicious Beings; ſince all other Beings and Actions are ſuch as he makes and wills them to be. Virtue and Vice only are Actions performed upon Choice and Principle, and therefore capable of his Reward or Puniſhment. It ſeems but reaſonable and fit that a perfect Being, who is intimate to all Natures, at all Times, ſhould diſtinguiſh virtuous and vicious Beings, in ſome Time and Manner, and ſhould favour and ſupport the one, and diſcourage and puniſh the other. Nay, it is neceſſary to the Support of all imperfect moral Agents, that there ſhould be a moral Governor and Judge of the whole World, which can only be God; and the more imperfect the State of any moral Agent is, ſo much more Need, and ſo much more Evidence there is, of this great Truth.

BUT

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and has appointed ſome future State of Retribution.

BUT when, and where, this Diſtinction will be made, is not ſo clear to our Reaſon. This our World and State is not the Place very plainly. Here is too great Mixture, and too indiſcriminate a Diſtribution of Good and Evil; Vice being permitted, and Virtue left to unavoidable Inconveniences; each, proper to a State of Trial, but neither deſigned to diſtinguiſh moral Characters. Nevertheleſs, ſince Virtue and Vice are real Differences of Action, the one ſuch as becomes a reaſonable Being, the other ſuch as Reaſon condemns; ſince their different Natures are neceſſarily known to God, and he does conſtantly approve the one, and diſlike the other; ſince his Favour or Diſpleaſure does accordingly follow moral Beings, as their Actions are thus good or evil; and ſince *this* World is not the Place of that Diſtinction which he will certainly make between the virtuous and vicious; it remains that there muſt be ſome State of our Exiſtence after this, in which all moral Agents will be dealt with according to their different moral Characters, and where God will appear to be, in the final Diſtribution of Happineſs or Miſery, the Tokens of his Favour and Diſpleaſure, what he really *now* is, in his Approbation and Diſlike, the Judge of all the moral World.

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THESE two last Considerations of God, as an universal Governor, and as a Judge, lay the Foundation of his Right to our Obedience, and of the Reasonableness of any extraordinary Signification of his Will and Designs, over and above the bare Deductions of Reason, to any Part of the moral World. For it is plain, that the Will of God, as it coincides with all moral Obligations, and enforces them on all his rational Creatures, so it does also further most indispensably oblige all moral Agents, *wherever* it does appear. And thus it may become the supreme Governor to interpose, and moral Beings are obliged to obey.

Whence he has a Right to our Obedience in every Circumstance.

AGAIN; as he does necessarily judge, and approve or condemn all moral Agents according to their Behaviour, and yet does not think fit to interpose in everyState of their Existence, in order to shew this his Approbation or Dislike, which might be inconsistent with a State of Trial; and this Favour and Displeasure of God are most of all obscure, (tho' ever certain in the Judgment of right Reason,) in the Imperfection and Corruption of any State; and farther, since this our State is manifestly very imperfect and corrupt, and the visible Distinction of virtuous and vicious Beings in it, is very small, and hardly discernable: I say, considering all this,

And from thence, and the State of Mankind arises a Ground of Hope, that he would some time or other in a particular manner interpose in the World.

this, it ſeems very fit, and becoming the SECT. universal moral Judge, to interpoſe in our VI. World, and to declare in ſome meaſure his *preſent* Approbation or Diſlike to Virtue and Vice, and his *final* Reſolution to reward or puniſh them. Add to this, the Darkneſs and Difficulty that muſt needs attend ſo imperfect and corrupt a State, and the Diſcouragement and Fear, not to ſay Deſpair, that muſt often affect the Hearts of weak and frail Beings in ſuch a State, eſpecially under a Senſe of any real Guilt, (and who is that moſt virtuous One among us that is free?) and the Conſideration of the kind and good Will of God to all his Creatures; and it will not be incredible and ſurpriſing, (nay will it not be a reaſonable and humble Expectation?) that the great Governor and Judge of the World ſhould ſupply theſe Defects, and ſupport ſuch Beings, by ſome poſitive Aſſurance of his Regard and Favour, Anger and juſt Diſpleaſure, according to the ſuitable Behaviour of his Creatures. And who ſhall ſay what Remedies and Encouragements, a Being of infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs may provide and beſtow on ſuch a World as this? theſe I ſay, are the Foundations of ſuch an *Interpoſure*; but whether God has thus interpoſed, and how; as well as what he may have thus declared, is to be judged of by its proper Evidence.

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Whence he has a Right to our Obedience in every Circumſtance.

THESE two laſt Conſiderations of God, as an univerſal Governor, and as a Judge, lay the Foundation of his Right to our Obedience, and of the Reaſonableneſs of any extraordinary Signification of his Will and Deſigns, over and above the bare Deductions of Reaſon, to any Part of the moral World. For it is plain, that the Will of God, as it coincides with all moral Obligations, and enforces them on all his rational Creatures, ſo it does alſo further moſt indiſpenſably oblige all moral Agents, *wherever* it does appear. And thus it may become the ſupreme Governor to interpoſe, and moral Beings are obliged to obey.

And from thence, and the State of Mankind ariſes a Ground of Hope, that he would ſome time or other in a particular manner interpoſe in the World.

AGAIN; as he does neceſſarily judge, and approve or condemn all moral Agents according to their Behaviour, and yet does not think fit to interpoſe in everyState of their Exiſtence, in order to ſhew this his Approbation or Diſlike, which might be inconſiſtent with a State of Trial; and this Favour and Diſpleaſure of God are moſt of all obſcure, (tho' ever certain in the Judgment of right Reaſon,) in the Imperfection and Corruption of any State; and farther, ſince this our State is manifeſtly very imperfect and corrupt, and the viſible Diſtinction of virtuous and vicious Beings in it, is very ſmall, and hardly diſcernable: I ſay, conſidering all this,

this, it ſeems very fit, and becoming the SECT. universal moral Judge, to interpoſe in our VI. World, and to declare in ſome meaſure his *preſent* Approbation or Diſlike to Virtue and Vice, and his *final* Reſolution to reward or puniſh them. Add to this, the Darkneſs and Difficulty that muſt needs attend ſo imperfect and corrupt a State, and the Diſcouragement and Fear, not to ſay Deſpair, that muſt often affect the Hearts of weak and frail Beings in ſuch a State, eſpecially under a Senſe of any real Guilt, (and who is that moſt virtuous One among us that is free?) and the Conſideration of the kind and good Will of God to all his Creatures; and it will not be incredible and ſurpriſing, (nay will it not be a reaſonable and humble Expectation?) that the great Governor and Judge of the World ſhould ſupply theſe Defects, and ſupport ſuch Beings, by ſome poſitive Aſſurance of his Regard and Favour, Anger and juſt Diſpleaſure, according to the ſuitable Behaviour of his Creatures. And who ſhall ſay what Remedies and Encouragements, a Being of infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs may provide and beſtow on ſuch a World as this? theſe I ſay, are the Foundations of ſuch an *Interpoſure*; but whether God has thus interpoſed, and how; as well as what he may have thus declared, is to be judged of by its proper Evidence.

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MY Design is not to treat of the Nature and Evidence of a Revelation, or to make Use of any Truth or Facts revealed, any farther than they come under the general Inquiry after a Rule of Action, and a Way to Happiness; and *this* the Consideration of God as a Governor and Judge does require.

THE greatest Evidence indeed of any true Revelation will by Necessity fall under this Inquiry; which must be its Agreement with our moral Obligations, and its Suitableness to the true Circumstances of our State, since nothing can be more certainly the Will of God, than what Reason requires; and no Revelation more worthy of God, than such an one as the true Case requires. But that which is proper to a Revelation, the Nature and Evidence of Miracles, the Credit and Probability of Testimony, and the several Marks of a divine Influence and Design, are beside my present Purpose, and your Request. Only thus much must be said, that Nature, and Truth, and Reason, require, that a true Revelation be received and believed, and that the Will of God, however discovered, be faithfully obeyed.

I SHALL now go on to consider some general and important Truths concerning the Nature, Capacity, and Relations of Man; from

from whence, with the foregoing Truths concerning God, his moral Obligations towards God, as well as those which respect himself, must flow. SECT. VI.

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Concerning MAN.

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IT has been already ſhewn, that Man is a dependent moral Agent; that is, has received his Being from God, and is, by Neceſſity dependent; and alſo has a moral Judgment, that is, a Capacity of diſtinguiſhing moral Good and Evil; and, as an Agent, is capable of uſing this noble Faculty. I need hardly add, that he is, in general, imperfect, ſince this is common to him with the whole Creation; and his own low Rank, even among imperfect Beings, does but too evidently appear. But I ſhall proceed to mention ſome other Conſiderations, from whence his general Obligations do ariſe.

Man conſiſts of Body;

IN the firſt Place then, he is to be conſidered, as conſiſting of two general and diſtinct Principles, Body and Mind. By Means of the former, he is ſubject to Impreſſions from Matter, and all Affections that can be produced by it: By the latter, he is vaſtly ſuperior to Matter, capable of beginning Motion, of thinking and judging. There may be

be infinite Degrees of Excellence in Spirits, as well as different Modifications of Matter. It is ſufficient, that he partake of the Natures of both in general. I think none have ever ſuppoſed him exempt from Matter: Indeed every Moment's Experience convinces us of the contrary. That he does alſo conſiſt of immaterial Subſtance, is too evident to be denied: The Powers he is allowed to have, cannot poſſibly be All Capacities of Matter. I will not ſtay to ſhew the Inconſiſtency of Self-motion, Memory, Thinking, Chuſing and Judging, and the like, with any Properties of Matter, but only obſerve, that the ſingle Principle of Conſciouſneſs cannot poſſibly reſide in a material Subſtance. There are many Reaſons to aſſert this, but the ſingle Property of Diviſibility, which is eſſential to Matter, makes it impoſſible. To divide a Subſtance capable of Conſciouſneſs, is utterly impoſſible in the Nature of Things, becauſe Conſciouſneſs cannot, even in Idea, be divided, and therefore to divide the Subſtance of which it is a Property, is impoſſible. So that Conſciouſneſs cannot reſide in Matter, whoſe eſſential Property is Diviſibility. It does not indeed follow, that Conſciouſneſs is eſſential to Immateriality, but that the Subſtance of Conſciouſneſs muſt be immaterial; which is all that I want.

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and of an immaterial Subſtance.

To

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Conſciouſneſs cannot be added to Matter.

TO ſay that God may add a Principle of Conſciouſneſs to Matter, is falſe and abſurd; unleſs it mean, that he may add an immaterial Subſtance with that Principle to Matter; which is true indeed, and what I aſſert: but as all real Properties muſt inhere in ſome Subſtance, and Conſciouſneſs cannot inhere in Matter, it is abuſing the Power of God, to ſay, that he can make it to do ſo; or cauſe Impoſſibilities to exiſt; which muſt be, if either a Property exiſts independent of any Subſtance; or an indiviſible Property inheres in a diviſible Subſtance. And this does not in the leaſt affect the Dependence of a conſcious Subſtance upon God, who may nevertheleſs, at his Will, annihilate, or otherwiſe obſtruct or deſtroy, the Capacities of an immaterial Subſtance.

MANY Objections and ſubtle Difficulties there are and may be raiſed againſt this Doctrine; but none appear to be of any real Weight: and Men ſhould be careful to hold faſt evident Truths, notwithſtanding Difficulties that do not plainly contradict them; and alſo fully to underſtand the Force of an Objection and Difficulty before they expect to be able to anſwer it.

The different Natures

MAN being thus compoſed, it is evident the Nature of his Mind is very different from that

that of his Body; the one ſenſible and active and rational, the other altogether paſſive and inſenſible; the Body, of no poſſible Uſe to the Mind, but to ſerve and be directed by it; the Mind, in its own Nature ſuperior and commanding. In what Manner the Communications between the Soul and Body are performed, we are not now capable of conceiving; tho', that they intimately affect one another is plain Fact, and there is not the leaſt Inconſiſtency in it: on the contrary, Body could have no poſſible Motion, if an active and conſcious Being, and therefore immaterial, did not originally cauſe it: and therefore it is not at all ſtrange, that Matter ſhould be a *Medium* of affecting the Mind, to which it is ſo intimately united in ſome Sort and Manner. But it is in very different Ways that they are capable of affecting one another. Matter is not only paſſive to the Mind, but ſubject to the Direction of its Will; whereas the Mind is ſubject to the Impreſſions of the Body, only as a *Medium*, by which other Agents do affect it; whether it be God in the conſtant or particular Laws of Nature, as they are called, or other Beings capable of interpoſing: for Matter itſelf is perfectly incapable of any Action.

SECT. VII. of Mind and Body, and their mutual Influence.

AGAIN; in conſequence of what has already been ſaid, Man is to be conſidered as immor-

Man immortal.

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immortal, or of a Duration that extends beyond the Limits of this Life. This appears to be true, from the moral Perfections of God, or the Nature and Circumstances of the State we now live in. These indeed are most strong and invincible Arguments for a future State. It seems by no Means worthy of the almighty, wise and good God, to create such a Being as Man is, for the best Purposes he is capable of in this World alone. The Pains, and Labour, and little Satisfaction, of every Stage of Life; the Calamities and Miseries of so great a Part of Mankind; and the Weakness and Defect, Disappointments and Sorrows of the happiest, would have been *alone* an unreasonable End of creating him. Much less does it become a moral Governor, to suffer Virtue and Vice to labour under such unequal Dispositions of Things, and to pass, upon the whole, as it were unregarded before him; that is, not to distinguish by any Notice of his, the only possible Excellency and Obedience, or Corruption and Disobedience, that his Creatures and Subjects are capable of. The Favour and Displeasure of God not having been here manifested, in any Proportion to the Virtues and Vices of Men, it reflects upon the Honour and Justice of God to suppose, that they shall never be otherwise distinguished, and that all Retribution

Moral Evidence of his future Existence.

tion of our Behaviour is thus to end here. This would not only argue a moſt unreaſonable Neglect of his own Works; but, what is yet more incredible, an Indifference to moral Good and Evil, Virtue and Vice itſelf, the very higheſt Excellence of the divine Nature, or the worſt Corruption of any rational Mind. SECT. VII.

Natural Evidence of his future Exiſtence.

BUT I ſhall not lay the whole Weight of human Immortality on theſe Arguments, great as they are, but ſhall argue alſo from the Nature of Man, as it already appears. I ſay then, that Man is by his Nature immortal; that is, capable of exiſting when the Body is diſſolved, by his own Nature, 'till God ſhall pleaſe to annihilate or deſtroy him. So that he needs only the Continuance of the natural Powers of his Mind, to continue to indure after he is ſeparated from the Body. It is plain I ſpeak now of the proper, conſcious intelligent Being or Perſon called Man; which is a Subſtance, as we have ſeen, diſtinct from Matter, tho' his preſent compound Being goes now by that Name; but the Identity, Perſonality, or Individuality of Man is in his Mind only. This conſcious Being then I affirm to be naturally immortal, becauſe it is immaterial and indiviſible. That which we call *Death*, or the

SECT. VII. the Diſſolution of the Body, is plainly a Separation of ſuch Parts of Man as may be ſeparated, and conſequently, a Deſtruction of ſuch Action and Motion only as depended on the Conjunction of thoſe Parts; but the Principle of Action, or original Self-mover is not thereby deſtroyed; for thoſe Capacities did before exiſt in the indiviſible Part of his Subſtance alone; and therefore cannot be affected by the Separation and Diſſolution of any other Parts of his Subſtance. As the Interception of Light between the Eye and the Object does not deſtroy or affect the natural Sight of the Eye, only its Exerciſe upon that Object, or that Medium thro' which it ſaw before; ſo Death, or the Diſſolution of the Body, does not deſtroy or affect the natural Capacities of the Mind, only its preſent Exerciſe upon certain Objects, or the Medium of its preſent Actions; but what other Actions it may afterwards be capable of, or by what Mediums it may produce its Effects, is now only Matter of Conjecture *.

* Indeed the Arguments of Reaſon for the Soul's Immortality are ſuch as prove only its natural Capacity of a future Exiſtence; and the Probability that it will really exiſt in another State. The former are properly natural, as taken from the Nature of its Capacity and Subſtance: the latter moral, as taken from the moral Character of God; on whoſe Will alone it muſt neceſſarily depend, whether any Being ſhall

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The Case of inferior Beings in this respect.

IT has, I confeſs, been ſometimes thought, that this Argument proved too much, and would equally demonſtrate the Immortality of all other ſenſible and conſcious Beings; and ſo the Brutes themſelves would be alſo thus proved to be immortal. But let Truth be allowed in all its Conſequences. I grant, that all conſcious Beings are by the Force of this Argument naturally immortal, and where there are any Reaſons for permitting their Duration beyond any limited Time, they have a natural Principle of Continuance. But as this does not in the leaſt decreaſe their Dependence upon God, who may nevertheleſs diſpoſe of them as he ſees fit and reaſonable; ſo alſo there is nothing abſurd or unreaſonable, as far as we can ſee, in ſuppoſing, that conſcious active Principle in the brute Creatures to endure, after the Deſtruction of their Bodies. What Purpoſes they may thus ſerve in the Univerſe, is quite paſt our Judgment; and what particular Inſtances of the Divine Wiſdom this Part of his Deſign may diſcover, we cannot ſay. To be ſure, the future Duration of all Beings will be ſuitable

ſhall continue to exiſt, whatever its natural Powers and Capacities are; as well as in what Manner, and for what Length of Duration it ſhall exiſt. Nevertheleſs an immaterial and individual Subſtance, is demonſtrably capable of exiſting, when all the Parts of Matter that are now limited to it, are ſeparated and diſſolved.

SECT. VII. to their ſeveral Natures, and the ſeveral Ends of their Exiſtence. This Principle of Activity in any Beings, is indeed ſomething great and noble; and if it be alſo Part of the Nature of theſe meaner Animals, whoſe Lives we are allowed to diſpoſe of, it ſhould affect our Minds with Reverence and humble Gratitude to our common Maker, when we take this Privilege in ſo ſacred a Thing. It is obvious, how the great Deſign of the Creation is carried on in this our World, by the Deaths, Deſtructions, and Revivals of numberleſs Creatures about us; ſo that there appears to be a vaſt Abundance, and Profuſion, and even Waſte of Life, as to preſent viſible Uſe, in the Works of God; many Beings ſeeming to ſubſiſt only for the Support and Nouriſhment of others, and ſpringing up again, as it were, from the Decays or Corruptions of other natural Productions; innumerable Species periſhing in the common Courſe of Things, in all Stages of their Exiſtence; and there are vaſt Numbers of thoſe that we know, whoſe Deſign and Uſe in the Creation we cannot underſtand. Theſe all go into the grand Contrivance, and make up a wiſe, beautiful, and bounteous Scheme, for the Uſe, Contemplation, and Happineſs of the ſenſible and rational Creation.

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BUT the future Duration of all conſcious Beings is more or leſs important, according to the Excellency of their Natures, and their Capacities and Expectations; and moſt important of all to thoſe Beings who have moral Capacities, and are conſequently accountable for their preſent Actions, and have therefore reaſon to expect Happineſs or Miſery, proportionable to their ſeveral Degrees of Virtue and Vice here, and their different paſt Enjoyments and Sufferings, according to the perfect Equity and Goodneſs of a righteous and almighty Judge.

I MIGHT here add the particular Conſideration of Man's being accountable for his Actions; but this being a neceſſary Conſequence of his moral Capacity, and one End of his future Exiſtence, as well as an Inſtance of his natural Dependence upon, and Subjection to God, as a moral Governor, it need not be diſtinctly mentioned, but is included and neceſſarily implied, in this whole Diſcourſe; and is the very Foundation of all moral Inquiry. A Judgment of Reaſon, together with Agency, renders every Being, in the very Nature of Things, accountable for its Actions. Therefore God himſelf is neceſſarily accountable, not indeed to any other Being, which would be an impious and abſurd Suppoſition, but to his own Conſcience

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of Truth and Right; tho', even in the Judgment of all rational Beings too, He will be clear when He is judged, and every Mouth ſhall be ſtopped from any Reproach of his Actions; ſtopped, not by Force of Power, but of Reaſon: ſo neceſſarily is every moral Agent accountable to his own Conſcience, whoſe Juſtification or Condemnation is therefore moſt abſolute and entire.

Man a ſenſible Being, ſubject to Impreſſions of Pleaſure and Pain;

IT has already been ſhewn, that Man is a rational moral Agent, and ſo capable of perceiving Truth. I now add, in the next Place, that he is alſo a ſenſible Being, and ſubject to Impreſſions of Pleaſure and Pain. Whether the Kinds and Degrees of Pleaſure and Pain to which he is ſubject, are the mere arbitrary Appointments of God, and the Nature of his Conſtitution, which might have been differently, or contrarily affected by the ſame Objects, as I am inclined to think all proper Senſations are; or whether ſome Pleaſures and Pains are the neceſſary Reſult of ſome Natures, or of the right or wrong Uſe of ſome Capacities and Faculties that he has, is not needful to be here diſcuſſed. The Diſtinction has already been obſerved, and may farther be examined afterwards. It is enough to the preſent Purpoſe, that the Truth in general be here allowed: And indeed none have ever denied it. Conſtant

ſtant and univerſal Experience leaves no room to doubt of our Senſibility to Happineſs and Miſery. Some have been ſo extravagant as to call Pleaſure Pain, and Pain Pleaſure in ſome Circumſtances, for the Sake of a Scheme; and to declare a Man happy in Pain, and miſerable in Pleaſure, through the ſame Prejudice; but all theſe have acknowledged the Exiſtence of Pleaſure and Pain, and that Men are ſubject to them. SECT. VII.

By Experience and Conſideration, we learn what conduces to our Eaſe and Happineſs, Trouble and Miſery, and the Ways of obtaining or avoiding them. Much of the Happineſs and Miſery of this State of Things is altogether unavoidable to us; much again is in our Direction, by Wiſdom, Prudence, and Caution; but none is certain and ſecure, but that only which is the Conſequence of our Virtues and Vices. Theſe are in our own Power alone, and theſe do moſt aſſuredly recommend us to the Favour, or expoſe us to the Anger, of that Being, who is the great Author and Diſpoſer of all Happineſs and Miſery.

When I ſpeak of Pleaſure and Pain as the Conſequence of Virtue or Vice, I mean not the neceſſary, or even natural Conſequence, neither of which can relate at all to

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the Favour of God; but I mean the moral or judicial Conſequence of Virtue or Vice; and this is therefore as certain only, as that there is a moral Governor of the Univerſe, who perfectly knows the Obligations of all his Creatures, and regards their Actions, and has all Happineſs and Miſery in his Hands.

and various Paſſions and Affections;

UNDER this Head are to be conſidered all the Paſſions and Affections that Men are, naturally, or in the Circumſtances of their Lives, ſubject to; which are no other than ſeveral ſorts of Pleaſure or Pain, to which, by the wiſe Author of our Beings, we are naturally inclined by our Conſtitutions, or expoſed by our Situation. As theſe natural Diſpoſitions cannot but be deſignedly placed in us for wiſe Purpoſes, ſo they are to be regarded by us in our moral Behaviour, as Truths that greatly concern us. Mere ſenſible Beings are neceſſarily under the Conduct of their Paſſions and Affections, which are the Law of their Natures, and are therefore very remarkably bounded in their ſeveral Subjects; while they are, in rational Beings, only bounded by their Reaſon, and require a moral Government. Therefore the proper

* There is indeed a ſtrict and more general Senſe of a State of Trial, meaning *that* wherein the Virtue of any Being is to be proved by right Actions and the Practice of Reaſon: This is a State common to God and all moral

Diſtinction of Men above the Brutes, is, that while both are ſenſible to many the like Pleaſures and Pains, Men only can and ought to conſider them as Subjects of their moral Actions. To mere ſenſible Beings they are a Rule invariably obſerved; to rational Beings, they are only natural Inclinations and Averſions, to be directed by Reaſon or moral Judgment. SECT. VII.

and is in a State of Probation.

I AM conſidering the Rule of Action to Men in their *preſent* Circumſtances, not now inquiring into any *former* or *future* different Perfections or Imperfections of their Exiſtence; and therefore I add, that they are to be conſidered as in a State of Trial, or peculiar Exerciſe of Virtue and Integrity *. Whoſoever will take a View of the preſent World, and carefully obſerve the Condition of Men in it; the uncertain and mixed Diſtributions of the Good and Evil of Life, the Variety of Circumſtances in which every Individual ſtands, the general Corruption that is ſuffered to prevail, the Obſtructions to Virtue, and the too conſtant Succeſs of Vice; in ſhort, the numberleſs Imperfections of the

* moral Agents, who can no otherways be good or reaſonable, but by doing good or acting reaſonably: But the uſual Senſe is, of a State of Imperfection, and of ſome Degree of Reſiſtance to Virtue by various Difficulties and Temptations.

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present State; will hardly imagine that it was designed, by a wise and righteous God, to be the perpetual Residence, and ultimate End of any reasonable Beings. On the other Hand, every Imperfection of the present State, Prosperity of the Wicked, Temptations of the Virtuous, Prevalence of Iniquity, different Dispensations, and unequal and promiscuous Disposal of natural Good and Evil, render this present Life peculiarly fit for the Trial and Proof of Virtue and Integrity. Some Degree of Imperfection, and consequently of Trial, must be the Condition of every created moral Being; but as some are in a far more confirmed State of Virtue and Righteousness than others, superior one to another, till we arrive to the most perfect dependent rational Mind; so we may easily suppose some fallen from Virtue, and corrupted by Vice and Unrighteousness, in many Degrees of Degeneracy and Habits of Wickedness. A proper State of Trial seems to be that middle Condition of a moral Agent, in which, by the Exercise of Virtue and Integrity, he may arrive to a State of more constant, and perfect, and secure Rectitude; or by Vice and Unreasonableness, may sink into Corruption and Degeneracy, even past all Hopes of Recovery. The Nature of Virtue does not indeed alter with the different Circumstances of Beings, but the particular

ticular Inſtances of it do: And ſo in the moral Obligations of Beings in a State of Trial, tho' they are no other than the Practice of Reaſon, yet that Practice relates to different Objects. Thus, as all imperfect rational Beings muſt have ſome Degree of Difficulty to reſiſt, in their Practice of Virtue, ſo the Difficulties and Temptations of all moral Agents are in Proportion to their Imperfection; and the greateſt Reſiſtance to Virtue, which they are to meet with, is proper to the *State of Trial* of any rational Beings. But it is the proper Care of God, the univerſal moral Governor, and to him it muſt be referred, that no Difficulties or Impediments of Virtue ſhall be ſo great, in the Condition of *any* moral Agents, as to overcome or deſtroy their Natures, or moral Capacities: for thus, they would be below a State of Trial, and ſo herd with the irrational Creation. God, who is the Author of all Beings, and is perfectly acquainted with their Natures and Diſpoſitions, can accordingly ſuit the Circumſtances of their Trial to each one; as in this State, the Differences of Capacities, Educations, Opportunities, and innumerable other Relations of our Exiſtence, make the Trials and Obligations of every Man different, and peculiar. SECT. VII.

HOWEVER, this our World is altogether more

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more fit for the *Proof* of Virtue, than the *Perfection* of it, in all its rational Inhabitants: And accordingly the Prevalency of Reaſon and Truth in the *Minds* and *Hearts* of Men, is the proper Virtue of our Condition; and rather fits us for, than brings us to, the Perfection of our Natures; as the Dominion of unreaſonable Paſſions and Affections is the Degeneracy and Deſtruction of them.

Virtue under Temptation, and Virtue in a more perfect State, differs in the Object of it, but not in the Nature of it, which is ever the ſame.

IT may be here proper to obſerve, how the Virtues of reſiſting Temptation, and withſtanding Difficulties, differ from thoſe of a more perfect State; not in their Natures, which are ever the ſame Practice of Reaſon and Truth, but in their Objects only; as the Circumſtances of Trial to any Being, differ from the Circumſtances of its Perfection; or as a Condition of Adverſity, differs from a Condition of Proſperity; in which Reaſon requires different Actions, upon the ſame Principles of Truth and Virtue. So that the Reſiſtance of Evil or Temptation argues, not greater Virtue, but a more imperfect State of any moral Agent. And therefore thoſe who attributed more Excellence to the Practice of human Virtue, under Temptation, than to the moſt perfect Being, who muſt needs be free from all ſuch Defect, miſtook the Nature of Virtue, ſo far, as to ſuppoſe the very Imperfection of the moral Agent did increaſe

increaſe the Degree of it. The Trial and Difficulties of Virtue ſhew the Imperfection of the Being that practiſes it; but the more perfect and excellent any Being is, the leſs Trial and Difficulty it is capable of in the Practice of Reaſon and Truth. Hence God himſelf, whoſe Rectitude is perfect, is infinitely above any Difficulty, Imperfection, or Reluctance, in his moral Actions; and in great Wiſdom and Goodneſs, has ever ſupplied the Weakneſs and Difficulties of his imperfect Creatures, with ſuitable Encouragements and Threatnings, according to their State of Trial and Temptation. But the moral Obligations of all rational Beings, are to practiſe Reaſon, as far as they are able, in all States and Conditions, of more or leſs Difficulty, Perfection or Imperfection: Tho' it muſt be granted, that in ſuch a State as this, there will be many Inſtances of Defect, and frequent Deviations from Reaſon and Truth, as the Weakneſs and Temptations of our Condition do in ſome degree prevail, even in thoſe that are truly virtuous. And therefore it is proper to add farther, that

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MAN is to be conſidered, in the preſent State of Things, under ſtrict Examination, in ſome Degree of Guilt, and ſubject, in many Inſtances of his Behaviour, to juſt Con-

Man is at beſt guilty in a leſs or greater Degree, and ſub-

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ject to Condemnation;

Condemnation. It is true, that nothing can fairly be required of rational dependent Beings, in any Circumſtance, but faithful Endeavours to practiſe Reaſon and exerciſe Virtue, as far as they can: And it is always ſtrictly poſſible, to be conſtant and faithful in the Uſe of all our Powers: And I will add, that as all imperfect Beings, after all their Care, are ſubject to Error, and more or leſs expoſed to moral Evil, it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that their wiſe and good Creator is ready to forgive all ſuch Failure and Tranſgreſſion of Reaſon, as is conſiſtent with the Love of Truth, and general Practice of Right, under the Difficulties of their Condition. Nevertheleſs every Defect in their moral Conduct, that is ſhort of the conſtant Exertion of all their Endeavours in the Knowledge and Practice of Virtue, is ſtrictly Guilt; and, under the Inſpection of a perfect and righteous Judge, ſubject to a juſt Condemnation. Indeed theſe Circumſtances of Guilt are vaſtly different, and have many different Degrees of moral Evil, known only to God, in all their Alleviations and Aggravations: But, more or leſs, all Men may be truly concluded under Guilt, in Fact, whatever be the Poſſibility of perfect Virtue, according to the preſent State. Who is there, that, upon diligent and impartial Inquiry into his own Breaſt, is not conſcious of many Defects in his

his Knowledge of Truth, that he might have really prevented by due Care and Induſtry, and that he knows are owing to voluntary Neglect and unreaſonable Diſregard? And who is not ſenſible of ſome Inſtances of guilty Indulgence to Senſe and Inclination, not only without, but againſt Reaſon; and Preference of Pleaſure and falſe Intereſt to the Conſcience of Right, and the Dictates of Reaſon? Theſe are inconteſtable Facts, for which I appeal to the Heart of every individual Man. SECT. VII.

BUT there are many Inſtances, in ſuch a State as this, of heinous Tranſgreſſions of Reaſon and Truth, great Guilt, and moſt notorious Abuſe of human Powers and Capacities; and yet thoſe that are conſcious of all this, are nevertheleſs under moral Obligations to the future Practice of Virtue, in this their Circumſtance. Theſe therefore muſt be conſidered as guilty, and ſo under ſuitable Obligations. No Power can make that to be undone, which is really done and paſt. All that any Being can do, is to acknowledge this Truth in its Actions, and ſubmit to its preſent Obligations. But it is always true, that ſuch is its Guilt, and ſuch its juſt Condemnation, by all rational Beings. What extraordinary Proviſions are, or may be made, for the Comfort and Encouragement of Creatures in ſuch Caſes, does not belong to this Inquiry;

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Inquiry; but this being the true State of the Caſe, and Men being more or leſs guilty before God, are to be conſidered as ſuch, in their moral Obligations, and to act accordingly.

and accountable for all the Evil he might have prevented by proper Cautions, and all the Good he might have ſecured.

IN the laſt Place, Man ought to be conſidered, as on the one hand, ſubject to all thoſe Evils and Hindrances, that it is in the Power of any other Beings to produce in him; ſo alſo on the other, as having thoſe Capacities and Aſſiſtances, that are in his Power to obtain and ſecure. It is very evident, that Men are expoſed to many Injuries and Obſtructions from one another, and probably from many other Beings, who, it is true, are under the Direction or Permiſſion of the ſupreme Governor; and they are alſo capable of many Helps from other Beings, and more eſpecially from God himſelf. Theſe are all to be conſidered, tho' not as any Part of his Nature, yet plainly as within his Reach, and among his Capacities: I mean ſuch as he is ſecure of from any certain Conduct in his own Power. Indeed no Attempt of any other Beings can affect his moral Character, any more than the Helps and Favours of them, or even of God himſelf, can be attributed to him, as Virtue. That muſt lie in his proper Cautions and Concern, to prevent the one, and to obtain and improve the other:

other: But he is juſtly accountable for the Evil he might prevent, and for the Good he might ſecure; and many moral Obligations will ariſe from ſuch Capacities. It is reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that the great and good Governor of the World has given Men, ſome way or other, Capacities to defend themſelves from the moſt important Injuries of their Condition, and to provide for their moſt important Welfare. And if he has further given us any particular Aſſurance of his Aſſiſtance, beſides the general Reaſons we have to ſuppoſe it, it is to be joyfully embraced, and carefully ſecured, as far as in us lies: and then every Man will become, not indeed the better in any moral Senſe, or more acceptable to his Maker, for ſuch Relief and Aſſiſtance, but happier, and more excellent in his Capacities, and under ſuitable Obligations, in his moral Conduct, according to that Favour and Help which he has received, or may obtain.

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SECTION VIII.

Of Duty towards GOD.

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General Instances of Duty to God.

HAVING thus represented the general *Truths* relating to God, and to ourselves, on which our consequent Obligations to God, and ourselves are founded; I shall just mention the general Instances of those Duties; and shew, how they arise from these Relations and Circumstances; and thus establish the Rule of Action to rational Beings before laid down. Our general Obligations to God appear to be as follow.

I. All possible inward Reverence and Esteem, and outward Expressions thereof.

WE owe to God all possible Reverence and Esteem: These, his natural and moral Perfections, as far as they can be perceived by us, require. Indeed, so far as we do perceive them, these Affections are necessary, as is Assent to any other Truth: And therefore this Duty consists in continual Helps and Endeavours to discover the Excellence of the Divine Nature, and in such voluntary Submission, Adoration and Obedience as his Greatness requires. Hither are to be referred all Acts of Homage and Worship that become us; a constant and habitual Sense of God's Existence and Perfections on our Minds;

all

all outward Expreſſions of that inward Reverence, that our Circumſtances and Occaſions afford us; awful mention of his Name; public and private Acknowledgments of his Being, and Dominion; and Joy in his Perfections, and in the Neceſſity of his Exiſtence. Theſe Sentiments Truth does require, and all Actions ſuitable to them. SECT. VIII.

AGAIN; this Homage is due to God only. The Acknowledgment of one God has ever diſtinguiſhed the Votaries of true Religion: It is the great Security againſt all Superſtition and Idolatry. Our Practice ought to be ſuitable to the Evidence and Importance of this great Truth. As there can be no doubt of it, it becomes us to be careful of any the leaſt Contradiction to it in our Behaviour. To put any abſolute Truſt in another, is infinitely fooliſh, and very dangerous. All our religious Worſhip and Obedience is therefore to be referred to the one God; and all the Principles of our Actions are to be conformable to this Truth. This due to none but God alone.

AGAIN; all the Duty we owe, and can pay to God, muſt be mental and ſpiritual. God has neither Body, nor Parts; and therefore it is abſurd and injurious to repreſent him, to ourſelves or others, by any Figure or bodily Reſemblance; or to offer him any Service, And muſt be entirely mental and ſpiritual.

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but that of the Mind. All Religion therefore is the Act of the Mind, and reſpects the Mind of God. Material Actions, or any outward Expreſſions of Action, cannot be religious, any farther than they expreſs truly thoſe inward and ſpiritual Actions. We have here therefore an infallible Rule by which to judge of all external Religion. So far as it proceeds from, and is the Effect of internal Action and Obedience, it is true and real: ſo far as it is without this Action of the Mind, it is mere Vanity: ſo far as it is deſigned to create or excite this inward Act, it is ſuperſtitious and falſe: ſo far as it is contrary to the Religion of the Mind, it is impious and immoral. External Religion is neither a moral End, nor a Means to it; but only an outward Expreſſion of internal Truth and Obedience, when it is ſincere.

Perſecution therefore abſurd and wicked.

HENCE appears the great Folly and Wickedneſs of all Sorts and Degrees of Perſecution, upon account of Religion. The outward Actions of true Religion may poſſibly be ſometimes promoted; tho' theſe have not a better Chance to be the Subject of Authority, than Truth has againſt Error; and Truth is but one, among infinite Errors: Nay, it has hardly this Chance; becauſe the falſe Policies of Men ſuit beſt with Errors: However, true Religion cannot poſſibly here-

by

by be promoted; for the Principle and Foundation of it is thus deſtroyed by the very Deſign. Hypocriſy and Wickedneſs muſt always be the Conſequence, juſt ſo far as Perſecutions have any Effect at all: I mean both negative and poſitive Allurements or Penalties. But this Subject is too plain now to be dwelt upon. All Pretenders to Reaſon are aſhamed of the Defence of Perſecution, however ſhort Men's Reflections may be, or however contrary their Prejudices and Practices. SECT. VIII.

The Caſe of religious Eſtabliſhments conſidered.

I MUST here alſo obſerve, that I cannot ſee how any Religion can be eſtabliſhed, without ſome Degree of Perſecution. Eſtabliſhments of Religion muſt be, ſo far as they have any Effect, prejudicial to true Religion, and deſtructive of the common Rights of Men. The very Eſſence of an Eſtabliſhment is the Favour and Encouragement of ſome particular Opinions; which muſt have the Influence above-mentioned, beſides the unequal Chance of Error. To be ſure, the wider the Eſtabliſhment the better, and conſequently it is beſt of all when the Reſtraints are None. I do not ſay, that Magiſtrates ought not to encourage Virtue and Religion in a Society, as far as they can, that is, ſuch Actions as are manifeſtly beneficial to the Public, if they can be properly

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called virtuous or religious; but real internal Virtue and Religion they cannot promote, any otherwiſe than by maintaining true Liberty, and defending every one from the Injuries of any pretended Zeal for or againſt Religion. It is moſt notorious to obſerve, how the Happineſs of Communities, and the Improvements of all Arts and Sciences, are ever in Proportion to the Liberty and Freedom of theſe Laws; and the Miſeries of this ſtrict Diſcipline are too viſible: not to mention the Errors and Vices that take Root and thrive under its Shadow.

THE Abſurdities, Follies, and Impieties, that Men have received as Religion under the beſt Governments, and among the wiſeſt People, and where Reaſon too has privately been at the higheſt, can no otherwiſe be accounted for, than as the Effects of that Ignorance, Sloth, Prejudice, Obſtinacy, and ſervile Subjection to Authority in Matters of Conſcience, which is infinitely abſurd, together with the Pride, Ambition and Covetouſneſs, that all Eſtabliſhments of Religion muſt more or leſs countenance and occaſion, whatever may poſſibly have been their original Deſign.

I WOULD not be underſtood, by any thing I have ſaid, to reflect on the univerſal Practice of

all Ages and all Governments. I know that ſome Religion has been favoured and maintained in all Societies; and Men have perhaps always found it neceſſary or convenient to ſupport theſe Powers and Pretenſions, as ſome Ballance to particular Weakneſſes and Corruptions: Much leſs would I be thought to complain of, and condemn, our own beſt and mildeſt religious Eſtabliſhment, the freeſt from Cruelty and Perſecution of any: But theſe Speculations lay directly under my Subject, and required Obſervation. I am ſenſible that Facts and Reaſonings often differ, and that the Neceſſities and Corruptions of Men muſt be managed by a thorough Acquaintance with their Ways, and a careful Experience of their Practices: But I muſt add, that ſeeing the numberleſs bad Conſequences of this Rule, of eſtabliſhing a Religion under every Government, and the tried Impoſſibility of promoting thereby Virtue and Sincerity of Heart, it ſhould ſeem at length worth an Attempt to try the Effects of an univerſal Toleration, and equal Incouragement of all Religions not detrimental to Society; to leave every thing, purely ſpiritual, to the free Operation of every Mind, and to the Direction and Aſſiſtance of that Spirit to whom only Religion can relate. This ſeems the faireſt Field for Virtue and Religion to exert itſelf in, unreſtrained by worldly

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ly Hopes and Fears; and would deliver the Civil Government from much Error, Trouble and Danger.

II. Other Instances of our Duty to God are, entire Submission to all his Dispensations as our natural Lord.

AGAIN; it is a great Duty we owe to God, to rejoice in his Dominion and Government; and to *submit* to his Will always. This is not inconsistent with our honest Endeavours after any Thing that appears fit to make us happy, but it requires them. The Providence of God consists in what he wills, or permits to be. Now our Duty is to use, with Thankfulness and Care, what Advantages our Circumstances afford, and to submit, with Patience and Chearfulness, to such Evils as either we cannot, or ought not to remove. This, however, is most sure and happy in all Cases, that all Things are under the Controul of God; and therefore whatever our Condition is, under our own due Care and Behaviour, it is such as God wills it to be, and therefore such as, upon the whole, is Best. The Extent of God's Providence is infinite, and therefore the greatest and most public Events, as well as the smallest and most private Disposals, are equally under his Care and Direction. Our Duty then is, a most entire and universal Dependence, with constant Assurance and Hope, that cannot fail.

AGAIN;

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III. And entire Obedience to his Will, however made known, as our moral Governor;

AGAIN; we owe to God all proper *Obedience*, as well as Submiſſion; for he is not only the natural Lord of the Univerſe, but alſo the moral Governor of all rational Beings. His Will, when diſcovered, is a Law and Rule to us, becauſe he is the moſt reaſonable Being, and the Lord of all. His Will can be known to us only by Reaſon, or expreſs Revelation. The former coincides therefore with the general Rule of Action laid down, and only adds the Divine Authority to a natural Law. It makes not Duty, but only lays us under additional and particular Obligation. The latter obliges by the Divine Authority only, and in Proportion to its Certainty or Evidence; it being moſt reaſonable to obey the Will of the moſt reaſonable Being, and our higheſt Intereſt to be ſubject to God. Our Obligation then, in this reſpect is, firſt, the ſame that Truth lays upon us; but with this additional and particular Reaſon, that it is the Will of God, and to be performed by us with regard alſo to his Authority and Favour. Or farther, It may be the mere Will and poſitive Command of God, which we are obliged to obſerve, as his Authority is moſt rightful and ſupreme over all.

Under a Senſe that he is al-

ONCE more; we are obliged to act as in the Preſence of God, and ſubject to his Judg-

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ment. Indeed he cannot but judge as our own Conſciences unbiaſed will judge; and therefore we may ſafely appeal to them, for the Approbation or Condemnation of God. But as here, we are plainly not dealt with according to our Actions, we muſt expect a Judgment to come; and all our preſent Behaviour ought to reſpect that Time, and the impartial Judgment of God. It is therefore our Duty to be ſatisfied with his Approbation, and to fear no other Condemnation; to practiſe Virtue under all its preſent Difficulties and undiſtinguiſhed Circumſtances, in the Aſſurance of the Divine Inſpection and Retribution.

ways preſent to us, and will be our Judge hereafter.

Of the Love of God.

AMONG the Obligations that we lie under to God, I have not mentioned particularly the *Love of God*. The Reaſon is, becauſe God being inviſible, and our Actions not being capable of affecting him in anywiſe, our Love of God can only be our Love of Truth and Virtue; that is, ſuch moral Ex-

* Nevertheleſs I muſt confeſs, that, ſtrictly and philoſophically ſpeaking, the Love of God muſt be the Love of ſome Being, to whom we aſcribe the greateſt Perfections. But then, to prevent Miſtakes and all enthuſiaſtical Notions, let us conſider a little what this Love of God really is. The Word *Love* is uſed in many different, and almoſt contrary Senſes. We are ſaid to love Fruit, Eaſe, Pleaſure, one another, Friends and Enemies, Life, Happineſs, and God. Theſe are very different Notions of

cellencies as we juſtly ſuppoſe to be in God; (for his natural Perfections cannot be the Objects of our Love, tho' they demand our Reverence and Eſteem. It is plainly abſurd to love God for his Eternity, Omnipreſence, Power, or the like. Love can only relate to ſuch Actions of any Being as are truly good and amiable.) and alſo becauſe this Love of the inviſible God can only be made to appear by the Effects in our Actions, the Practice of Truth and Virtue. So ſtrictly is the Love of God, the Practice of Reaſon, and keeping his Commandments. Thus the Love of God, in its full Extent, is, the higheſt Perfection of Virtue in the Heart and Life. It is therefore both abſurd and impudent in any one, to pretend that he *loves God, whom he has not ſeen*; that is Truth and Reaſon, with full Approbation and univerſal Practice; when he does not *love his Brother whom he has ſeen*; that is, ſhew his Love of God and Truth in this plain and obvious Inſtance of Virtue and Obedience before him *. SECT. VIII.

of Love, and proceed from very different Principles. But, not to trace and diſtinguiſh them, which would be tedious, I will only conſider *Love* in two Lights; as an *Affection*, and as a *Duty*. In the former Senſe, it is *natural* and *neceſſary*; it may be a Beauty, an Elegance, an Happineſs, or Misfortune; but ſeems to have no Merit, as it was not induced by any Obligation. This indeed may be more or leſs refined, and may be raiſed even to the Love of Truth, of Virtue, and of God; but

SECT. VIII. I HAVE alſo omitted the particular Inſtances of Duty that theſe ſeveral Truths require, deſigning only to trace out the general Obligations from the Rule of Action laid down; and I appeal to every Man, if theſe Natures, Relations and Circumſtances, do not point out theſe Obligations, and ſuch as theſe.

HERE we ſhall find ourſelves obliged to *inquire* after the Will of God, our Lawgiver and Judge, however it may be diſcovered; and, feeling the Force of his Commands, as

but then, as it lies only in Speculation, it is as yet no Act of the Will, but *neceſſary*. Truth was ever aſſented to, and Virtue allowed to be excellent, and God to be perfect, by every Being, good or bad, capable of perceiving them: But this Aſſent of the Mind, not being attended with any Act of the Will, determining itſelf according to the Nature and Obligation of theſe Truths, is no more than mere Aſſent and Paſſion, like any other Affection, Satisfaction or Delight. Indeed when the Mind hereupon acquieſces in, indulges and incourages theſe Diſpoſitions, perceiving them to be reaſonable; then it becomes a moral Act; and as it perceives theſe Affections to be right or wrong, it may comply with, or refuſe the Obligations it lies under from theſe Conſiderations; then this *Love* becomes Matter of *Duty*, in the other Senſe I was conſidering. To return therefore to our Inquiry, What is the *Love* of God as a *Duty?* Love, as an Affection, is the Perception of Excellence, Delight in Good, Satisfaction and Pleaſure in what is uſeful and advantageous: But Love, as a *Duty*, conſiſts in ſerving, helping and promoting the Happineſs of the Beings we love: Thus we may love ſenſible

well as the Weakneſs and Imperfection of our own Capacities, and of the State we are in; be ready to wiſh, that ſome other Aſſiſtance were afforded us, than what the Light of Reaſon only diſcovers; that the Favour and Diſpleaſure of God to the Virtuous and Vicious were more manifeſt, than by the preſent Diſpenſations they appear to be; that ſome Interpoſition were made in Favour of Virtue; and ſome farther Aſſurances were given of a better State, where Truth and Reaſon do more prevail, and have their natural and uninterrupted Effects; and, in SECT. VIII.

ſenſible Animals, Man, Angels, Friends, and Enemies. But this Goodneſs does not extend to God. How then ſhall we expreſs the Acts of *Love*, due to his Excellence and Perfections? Plainly by no other poſſible Way than this; To rejoice in his neceſſary Being and infinite Perfections, his uncontrouled and univerſal Dominion, his conſtant Care and Direction of the Whole; hereupon exciting in our Minds a conſtant and deep Reverence, a moſt chearful and faithful Obedience to all his Laws, an unfeigned and ſatisfactory Reſignation to all his Will, with a moſt aſſured Truſt and Hope in all his Promiſes, and an intire Dependence upon him in all our Actions, Deſigns, and Expectations. This is all the Love and Service that we can pay to God, and all that he requires. This ſeems to be the Extent of that great Duty, the *Love of God*. The Indulgence of *Affection*, even on the Contemplation of his Excellence and Perfection, without any Perception of Obligation, may be pleaſing and uſeful, with Care and due Caution; otherwiſe it will be apt to run into Enthuſiaſm, and a confuſed dangerous Paſſion: However, it is not the *Duty* of loving God.

ſhort,

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ſhort, where the Practice of Reaſon, and Virtue, and Truth, is attended with more certain and conſtant Happineſs. I do not ſay that theſe Apprehenſions are ſtrong enough to conclude that there is ſuch an Interpoſition of God; but I think they make the Hope and Expectation of it reaſonable; and prepare the Mind for the Reception of a Revelation on its proper Evidence; and oblige us to a thankful Acceptance of ſo divine a Favour, and to a faithful Obedience to ſuch divine Commands as are agreeable to the Nature of Virtue, and ſuitable to our preſent State; if duely atteſted and plainly revealed. But this lies beyond my Deſign.

SECTION

SECTION IX.

Of Duty towards OURSELVES.

I SHALL now take notice of ſuch general Duties as reſpect ourſelves, and ariſe from the Truths already laid down. And thus, SECT. IX.

Men's Actions muſt be, I. With Choice, and muſt reſpect the Law of Reaſon or Truth.

WE are obliged to act with Choice and Deſign, and to regard the Truth of Things in our Actions. This has been ſhewn to be an human Capacity, and the Foundation of Morality. Every Man is conſcious of this Judgment of moral Good and Evil; and is therefore neceſſarily juſtified or condemned by himſelf in all his Actions. Few Actions are indifferent; at leaſt, the Habits of them. Moral Agents are by Nature ſubject to the Laws of Reaſon; and their Duty is to regard them in what they do. They cannot tranſgreſs them without Self-condemnation, which is the higheſt natural Penalty that can attend any Law. All Actions therefore of moral Beings, done without Reaſon, are unworthy of their Natures, and greatly debaſe them: Such as are done againſt Reaſon are immoral, and expoſe them to juſt Puniſhment: and ſuch as are done according to deliberate Principles of Truth and Reaſon, are worthy of rational

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rational Beings, and preſerve and perfect their Natures. Under this Head are to be conſidered all Deſires and Appetites, all Averſions and Pains. Theſe cannot be allowed as Motives of Action to moral Beings as ſuch, any farther than the Mind perceives the Reaſonableneſs of purſuing or avoiding them. But I muſt not deſcend into more particular Obligations on this Head.

II. Muſt be in all Humility, as they reſpect ourſelves and others.

AGAIN, Man is obliged in all his Actions to be ſenſible of many and great Imperfections of his Capacities and Circumſtances, and thereupon to be humble; not aſſuming Truth to himſelf, much leſs preſcribing it magiſterially to others; ready to allow the Excellencies of ſuperior Beings, and to ſuppoſe Merit in others. Moreover, he is on this Account to be ever endeavouring to ſupply his Defects by getting Knowledge, and by practiſing Virtue; careful that he does not deceive himſelf, by ſuppoſing that Knowledge and Virtue in him which he has not, nor is at all conſcious that he has; fearful of taking up Opinions without Evidence, or thinking that there can be any Obligation to know or believe any Truth, but from the proper Evidence of it, appearing to him; well knowing that there can be no moral Virtue in any bare Apprehenſion or Aſſent of the Mind, much leſs in the mere Pretences

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to ſuch Belief; and that no Ignorance can poſſibly be blameable, but of ſuch Things as a Man ought, (of which Obligation hardly any Judgment is to be made, but by God himſelf) or pretends, to know. Theſe Duties, and many more of this ſort, ariſe from the Conſciouſneſs of our Imperfections. SECT. IX.

AGAIN; we are obliged to preſerve the Dignity and Superiority of our Minds, and to keep the Body and all the Affections of it under due Government. This is the Order of Nature, and the Privilege of our Beings. It is therefore baſe and unnatural to ſubject theſe higher Powers to inferior Paſſion and Appetite. As we are compounded of rational and ſenſible Faculties, and other Beings among us are only ſenſible, we do no otherwiſe diſtinguiſh ourſelves from them, than by the conſtant Uſe of our Reaſon. Every irrational Action ſets us upon a Level with, or below them; and all rational and moral Behaviour is according to our own Natures, and ſecures to us the Privileges of the higheſt Orders of Beings; ſince no Faculties can, in their Natures, be ſuperior to reaſon, tho' they may differ as much as Perfection and Imperfection do. In ſhort, we are obliged to regard ourſelves as intelligent moral Agents, and to act as accountable Beings; III. Men muſt preſerve throughout, the Mind's Superiority to all Bodily Affections;

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Beings; All Temperance, Sobriety, and Self-government, and the conſtant Practice of Reaſon, is included in this Obligation, and founded upon this Truth.

IV. And muſt regard a future State of Exiſtence;

WE are farther obliged to reſpect a future State of Exiſtence, in all our Actions: This plainly gives a very different Relation to all we do. Many, if not moſt of our preſent Circumſtances and Actions, hereupon become very trifling and inſignificant, any farther than they tend to future Conſequences. Our Actions belong to us through our whole Duration; and it is of little Concern how they appear, and what Circumſtances attend them now, in Compariſon of their Account in the Judgment of the whole reaſonable World, and of God himſelf, and their Influence upon our Happineſs hereafter. It becomes us therefore to maintain a Conſciouſneſs of our Immortality, and a ſuitable Greatneſs of Mind; to live above the Judgment of Senſe and preſent Views; to deſpiſe the low and vain Purſuits of the Generality; and to know our Natures; and to deſign and act for Immortality. Our Duty is, in all our preſent Behaviour, to prepare for a better State of Exiſtence, and that more important Part of our Duration. This can only be by the Practice of Reaſon and Truth, as far as our preſent Im-

Imperfection will allow, and thereby fitting ourſelves for that better State of more perfect Reaſon and Happineſs. SECT. IX.

V. And are obliged to purſue true Happineſs, in due Subordination and Meaſure.

MAN being a ſenſible Creature, is obliged to ſecure his own Happineſs. There can be no Doubt in preferring Happineſs to Miſery. Nothing can be more reaſonable, and therefore Men are obliged to regard it in their Actions. But then, as Pleaſure does not conſtitute Duty, as ſuch; and Happineſs is a mere arbitrary Gift of God; Men are neceſſarily obliged to conſult their Happineſs, in Subordination to their Duty and prior Obligation; and in an abſolute Dependence on God: That is, they are to endeavour after as much Happineſs as is conſiſtent with their Duty, and with Submiſſion to the Will of God. How this is to be done will fall under Conſideration in its Place. In the mean time, it is plainly a moral Duty to ſeek after true Happineſs; and that Man is unreaſonable that neglects ſo important a Concern. So little reaſon is there to contrive Diſtinctions, and frame Excuſes, for a virtuous Man's Choice of Pleaſure and Happineſs, in the numberleſs Occaſions and Changes of Life. Indeed, Senſibility being an inferior Faculty, and not a Rule of Action to rational Beings; we are to conſult Reaſon in the Acceptance and Choice of Pleaſure; and, Paſſion and Appetite

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petite being dangerous Inclinations in Men, when free from the Controul of Reaſon, great Sobriety and Caution is to be uſed in the Enjoyment of Pleaſure. There is infinite Danger in too great Frequency and Exceſs, leſt the Love of Pleaſure become habitual, and too ſtrong, and ſo the Rule of Duty be viciouſly miſtaken, interrupted, or borne down. However, we are moſt certainly obliged to make ourſelves as happy as Truth and Reaſon will permit; to ſuffer no needleſs Uneaſineſs, and to loſe no true and reaſonable Enjoyment that is within our Reach.

VI. And to conſider themſelves as in a State of Probation, not of Perfection.

WE are farther to conſider ourſelves as in a State of Trial; and tho' we aim at Perfection, not to expect it here. We are rather Candidates for Virtue and the Rewards of it, than ſettled and ſecure in the Practice of it. We are to keep our Minds exerted to reſiſt all the Difficulties in our Way, and to rejoice in the Trial of our Integrity, by which only now we can bring Glory to our Maker, be uſeful among Men, and ſecure our own Happineſs. We are not therefore to wonder or complain, if all the Circumſtances of our preſent State are not ſo happy, convenient and free, as we could wiſh. It is ſufficient if they be ſuch, as we may exerciſe Virtue in, and make Occaſions of our Duty and Submiſſion, and of our Hopes of

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a better State. We are to bear the Inconveniencies of Life, and ſubmit to the Difficulties of Virtue, with Patience and Courage; to guard againſt all the Dangers and Evils of our Condition; and if at any time we be foiled and overcome, to recover as ſoon as we are able, and gain the Benefit of all our Experience. Theſe are the Duties that a State of Trial requires, and they naturally lead us, in the next Place,

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VII. And to be ſenſible of many failings and Imperfections.

To be ſenſible of many Imperfections, and even of Guilt too, more or leſs, and many Deviations from the ſtrict Rule of Truth and Reaſon. We ought hereupon to be very humble, and ſenſible of the Puniſhment we may have deſerved; to examine ſtrictly our own Hearts and Actions; to amend what is amiſs, with all poſſible Diligence and Care; and to watch particularly againſt ſuch Inſtances of our Trial, wherein we have failed; in ſhort, to ceaſe to do Evil, and to learn to do well with all our Capacities. I muſt add, that it is our Duty to look out for all the Relief that may be had for our Caſe; to make all Reparation to the Honour of the divine Law of Reaſon and Truth; and to rejoice in any Aſſurance we can obtain of the Favour of our Maker, and of his Aſſiſtance againſt all our Imperfections, whether natural or acquired, under the

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Senſe of Guilt, and the Fear of his Diſpleaſure.

VIII. And muſt treat the real Diſadvantages of our Condition as what we cannot avoid, and our every actual or attainable Advantage as the Foundation of Duty.

THIS one more general Obligation we lie under, to look upon all the neceſſary Hinderances and Injuries of our Condition, as ſo many real Incapacities; and alſo to regard all the Helps and Aſſiſtance that we can get, as ſo many Foundations of Duty; for ſuch they are. Hereupon, we are not to be troubled and uneaſy becauſe many Things are not in our Power; nor to excuſe ourſelves from any Obligations, for want of Abilities and Strength that it is in our Power to obtain. We are to conſider all the Advantages and Diſadvantages of our Circumſtance, ſo far as we can affect them by our Actions, as laying ſuitable Obligations upon us. They cannot indeed, of themſelves, recommend us to God, or occaſion his Diſpleaſure; but we ought to remember that we are accountable for the Uſe and Improvement of them.

THUS do the general Obligations we are under toward Ourſelves appear from the Truths of our Natures, Circumſtances, and Relations. They are, in ſhort, to practiſe Reaſon in all our Actions, and to purſue the proper Happineſs of our Beings.

SEC-

SECTION X.

Concerning MANKIND.

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IT now remains that we conſider the Natures, and Circumſtances, and Relations of our Fellow-Creatures; from whence we ſhall perceive the general Obligations that we lie under to them.

General Obligation to Beings of a ſuperior Order;

THE Univerſe is the Creation of God; and we lie under Obligations to all Beings that our Actions can reach or affect. It is reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that there are numberleſs Ranks of Beings ſuperior to ourſelves. The vaſt, or rather infinite Diſtance between ſuch as we are, and the higheſt and moſt noble Beings that our almighty Creator may think fit to have created, is a Chaſm, as we have much Reaſon to believe, far greater than takes Place in the Works of ſo powerful, good, and wiſe a Being. Theſe, as they are not now particularly known to us, can only be conſidered in general, and excite in us a Senſe of our low and mean Place in the intelligent World, and a Concern leſt we ſhould debaſe ourſelves in their Sight, and ſo become, not only inferior, but contemptible. We owe them, however, all Good-will

SECT. X. and Reverence, with Desire of their Favour and Help, wherein they are capable and allowed to interpose.

And of an inferior Order; THERE are also Beings inferior to ourselves, which are void of Understanding, and Discernment of Truth: for with such Capacities as these, we cannot easily conceive a lower Order than ourselves. They are either sensible, vegetable, or inanimate Beings. These being under no moral Obligations, cannot direct their several Capacities to the Ends that Reason requires; and therefore are to be used and directed by all rational Agents, according to their Natures, and their Fitness to serve the Purposes of Truth and Happiness in the World. All the Effects of our Actions towards them, can only be with regard to their particular Happiness. Truth and Reason can only require that we remember their Sensibility to Pleasure and Pain; for mutual Obligations there can be none. So that we are only to use them faithfully, according to their Relations and Influences on other Beings, and their own Subjection to Pleasure and Pain. The former will fall under the following Inquiry; the latter demands Care and Mercy in our Actions towards them; that no unnecessary Pain be brought upon them; and that in their necessary and lawful Deaths, it be as small as we

we can contrive, and that the Circumſtances of it be as little grievous in themſelves or Conſequences as may be: Tho' indeed the Aggravations of their Pains and Deaths are by no means to be judged of by our own, which are vaſtly increaſed and altered by Reflection and Expectation, which would be uſeleſs to them; and are alſo very different upon other Accounts. SECT. X.

THE Truths therefore that lie before us, are ſuch only as relate to ſuch rational and ſenſible Beings as we are, and converſe with; of which theſe that follow are important.

MEN are to be conſidered as rational and moral Agents; and as ſuch, they have Properties and Rights peculiar. The Truth of this has before been made evident; and it is plain that many Rights are founded upon moral Capacities. Theſe give Men Dominion over themſelves, their Actions, and juſt Poſſeſſions. Other Beings inferior have Powers and Capacities too, that are their own naturally; but then, not having Diſcernment of Truth and Obligation, and of the Uſe and Property of Things, they are themſelves, and all their Powers, ſubject to rational Beings. But Reaſon and moral Capacities do not only diſtinguiſh Men from mere ſenſible Agents, but alſo give them a natural and pro-

And in reſpect of our own Order.

I. By our moral Capacity we have natural Right and Property, as to ourſelves and irrational Beings.

SECT. X.

per Dominion over Beings that cannot direct themſelves according to Reaſon.

DOMINION is not founded upon Power, but on Property, Conſent, or general Good. All Dependence indeed ſuppoſes Power in that Being upon whom we depend; a Regard to which, for the Sake of our own Happineſs, is Obedience to that Power: but that Obedience is then only a moral Virtue, when to Power belongs a juſt Dominion and Authority, founded upon Right, and the Matter of the Command is not inconſiſtent with any moral Obligations; and ſo Happineſs is choſen reaſonably.

Moral Dominion can be in God only.

I WOULD here only obſerve a neceſſary Diſtinction between natural and moral Dominion. Property, Conſent, or general Good, as I ſaid before, may conſtitute the former, but the latter can poſſibly be in God only. He is not only the natural Lord of the Univerſe, but the moral Governor of all rational Beings, who are by their Capacities ſubjected to the Laws of Truth and Reaſon, which are his Laws, reſulting from the neceſſary Relations of thoſe Things which he has made. Therefore Obedience to Truth and Reaſon is Obedience to God, who requires this moral Subjection of all rational Beings. But it is infinitely abſurd to ſuppoſe any Degree of this moral

moral Government in any other, but in God only. The moſt perfect Being and Author of all Nature, is alone capable of receiving this free Subjection of the rational Mind to Truth and Reaſon, as his proper Homage and Service, who muſt neceſſarily require this Obſervation of Truth and Reaſon from all his rational Creatures. SECT. X.

HENCE it is infinitely happy for the Univerſe, and advantageous to the Intereſt of Truth and Virtue, that all Power, and Dominion, and Authority, is neceſſarily ſupreme in the moſt perfect and reaſonable Being, whoſe Property all things neceſſarily are, and to whom all are naturally and morally ſubject: and therefore Obedience to him is perfectly conſiſtent with Truth and Virtue; and that final Happineſs, which depends upon his Favour, is neceſſarily connected with the Practice of Reaſon, and ſecure in his Supremacy and moral Government of the Univerſe.

How far this natural Dominion may extend among Men, and what Limits are to be obſerved in it, depends on the Determinations of Reaſon, or the poſitive Permiſſion of God. There are alſo Degrees of Reaſon and moral Capacity in Men; but theſe give them not Dominion over each other; becauſe any Degree

Natural Dominion not altered by the different Degrees of moral Capacity.

SECT. X.

gree of them gives this natural Dominion over themſelves and Beings of inferior Natures. Beſides, who ſhall judge of theſe different Degrees? To allow a Judgment in any one, is to *aſſert* a Superiority and Dominion, not to *prove* it.

The natural Equality of Men.

HEREUPON is founded a natural Equality among Men. For ſince all have Capacities, Properties and Poſſeſſions, that are their own, no one can rightly intrench upon another's, without his Conſent. But Men may thus conſent, tacitly and implicitly, as well as openly and expreſly, in transferring ſuch Properties and Rights, as are in their own Natures alienable.

IT is Reaſon therefore, and a Senſe of moral Obligation, that gives Men Dominion over themſelves and what is their's; which Property none can juſtly interrupt or deſtroy, but he that gave it, that is, the Lord of all Natures. For every other Being can but give what it has before received. I ſhall not ſtay to ſhew more particularly the Diſtinction of Right and Power, nor how the one cannot affect the other: Theſe Things are manifeſt. Upon this natural Property and Dominion is founded the next Conſideration of Man, as

SOCIAL,

SOCIAL, and under particular Laws and Government. Many are the natural Advantages of Law and Government among Men; where different Inclinations and Paſſions, unreſtrained by Reaſon or Penalties, would often and greatly diſturb the Peace and Welfare of Mankind. Whatever was the actual Riſe or Occaſion of Government, whether a combined Uſurpation of the more Powerful over the Weak, or the voluntary Submiſſion of the Majority to certain Rules of natural Defence and Safety, or, laſtly, an introduced Awe and Veneration towards certain Perſons and Rules, pretended or real, for the greater Influence over Men: Whatever, I ſay, was the actual Riſe of it, Reaſon does ſufficiently declare, that the Manner and Meaſure of it muſt be judged of by the reaſonable End and Deſign of its Inſtitution. This is plainly the Good of the Community; and of this, by Neceſſity the Community themſelves are the Judges; ſince a Right of judging, which is a plain Superiority, cannot be prior to the general Conſent. However, Government by reaſonable Laws being very advantageous to Men, and they being actually diſtributed into different Governments, they are to be conſidered as ſuch, and our Obligations will be accordingly. But Men are not only combined together by Laws and voluntary Subordinations; they are alſo naturally ſocial, and inclined

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II. We are to be conſidered as ſocial; partly by natural Make, partly by artificial Combinations.

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clined to mutual Converſe. They ſtand in need of each other's Aſſiſtance, and owe many Joys and Comforts to Societies and Friendſhips. They are therefore to be regarded as under theſe natural and uſeful Inclinations and Sympathies, and to be treated as Beings of this particular Make.

III. And as under Family Obligations, and thoſe of natural Kindred.

MEN are alſo to be regarded as under the Engagements of Families, and in the Relations of Kindred: Theſe Relations are natural and moſt intimate. The neceſſary Dependence of Mankind on the Care of one another, is very remarkable. The whole Race are helped and preſerved, by the ſeveral particular Cares of each Individual, ſo far as their Capacities and Influence can reach. Theſe Obligations take their Riſe from the original Vows of Fidelity, expreſſed or implied in that reaſonable Intimacy, by mutual Conſent, which paſſes between the Sexes. It were eaſy to point out the Reaſonableneſs and Obligation of ſuch Engagements, the Happineſs that is thereby procured to the Parties, and to the Society in general; and to ſhew the Miſchiefs of large and unlimited Inclinations: But it is moſt evident, that the Deſcendents of any Pair do conſtitute a new Relation between them, and lay Obligations mutual and intire; ſuch as cannot be diſ-

penſed with or ſeparated from their joint Concern; and claim Aſſiſtance and Relief in peculiar Tenderneſs and Neceſſity. Our Obligations here ariſe from natural and voluntary Engagements that are plain and obvious, ſo that our Inclinations and Reaſon direct us moſt ſtrongly to our Duty. The Objects and Meaſure of our Concern depend upon particular Circumſtances, beſt known to every one ſingly; and require the Love of Truth and Practice of Integrity, to diſcern and reſpect, as all Virtue does. SECT. X.

ONCE more; Men are to be conſidered as Beings, whoſe Happineſs is greatly affected by our Actions. That the Happineſs of the World at preſent depends much upon the faithful Endeavours of every Individual, is very manifeſt. Indeed the Great Ruler of the Univerſe does often interpoſe to make happy or miſerable, notwithſtanding our Aims and Actions: But he has left very much to our own Direction and Influence. However, we may communicate ſome Happineſs to our Fellow-Creatures; and our Duty towards them does greatly conſiſt in doing ſo, as far as we can; and we know that we depend upon them, and expect their Favour and Help towards ourſelves. It is not to be diſcovered, but by very careful Obſervation, how greatly the Happineſs of Mankind is owing to a virtuous

IV. And as contributing by our Conduct very much to the Happineſs or Miſery of Mankind.

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tuous and benevolent Practice: Nay, the Influences of such a Behaviour is beyond all Notice and human Judgment. The actual Joy and Comfort that a good Man causes in the Security of his Dependents, and the Instances of his Good-will, distributing Justice, and bestowing Kindnesses, spreads far around him; besides the sincere and earnest Endeavours and Wishes of such an one; which, how far they may prevail among Men, but especially with the Governor of the World; and what Happiness God himself may give for his Sake, is not to be said; tho' Reason and Truth suggest many Hopes. The Truth is, Happiness is desirable, and we have a great deal of it in our own Disposal, and our Fellow-Creatures depend very much upon us for it, and Our Obligations are accordingly.

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SECTION XI.

Of Duty towards OTHERS.

NOW the Obligations arising from these Truths, laid down concerning our Fellow-Creatures, are very obvious. SECT. XI.

GOVERNORS and Magistrates are first concerned to use faithfully their Capacities, Powers, and Privileges. Justice, Equity and Truth, are intrusted to their Execution. There are many Instances in which they are in a manner unaccountable, or however there is no present Redress. They have their Fellow-Creatures very much in their Power, and ought therefore to be strictly impartial, careful and diligent, to know what is Law and Right; faithful and exact in doing Justice, and merciful and compassionate in the Punishment of Offenders. That great Law of Nature and Reason, to do as we would be done by, to judge of the Feelings of others by our own, that we may use them as we should reasonably expect from them in a like Circumstance, is peculiarly obligatory on Governors, who are often no otherways controuled. They should remember the natural Equality of Men, and that their Superiority is by Consent, and a Trust to be accounted for, often here,

I. Magistrates, their Obligations in the Use of their Power.

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here, but certainly hereafter. This would make them not very fond of Power and Authority, or however, moderate and careful in the Uſe of them.

II. The Obligation to exact Juſtice from all to all.

WE are hence obliged to the moſt ſtrict and proper Juſtice, which conſiſts in giving unto all their Rights and Dues. If there be real Property; and many Actions and Things belong to particular Beings; then Truth does require that they be not intrenched upon, or interrupted by others. As we expect to enjoy our own, and uſe freely what we have; the ſame Reaſon is ſtrong to oblige us, to a ſuitable Behaviour towards others. Juſtice is ſo plain a Duty, and ſo conſtantly before every Mind; that it is never tranſgreſſed, but againſt Conſcience; and hence all Virtue goes often by that Name, and is thought to be included in it. The particular Inſtances are various as the Properties of Men, and our Concernment with them; and need not be noted. They relate to Perſons, Actions, Goods, Fame, and many other Circumſtances. Only it muſt be particularly remembered, that of all the Rights of Men, none are ſo ſacred as thoſe of Conſcience. Theſe are unalienable, and cannot be given up to any of our Fellow-Creatures, upon any Pretence whatſoever. God is the only moral Governor of the Univerſe; ſo that, if it were poſſible for us to part with

with our own Rights, in this Reſpect, as we cannot, we could not however, without great Impiety, diſpoſe of His. So abſurd and wicked is all Affectation of Dominion over the Conſciences of Men; and ſo baſe and ſervile is all Submiſſion to ſuch unrighteous Uſurpation. SECT. XI.

III. The Obligations due to Laws and Governors.

WE are alſo to regard the Orders and Diſtinctions, Laws and Governments, among Men. To theſe we own Reſpect, Submiſſion, Obedience, and Aſſiſtance. The World being generally under ſome Government, we cannot find ourſelves out of ſome Protection, nor conſequently free from all ſuch Obligation. The Goodneſs or Badneſs of Laws do not concern us, as Subjects, any farther than to rectify them as far as we are able, and in a ſuitable manner. If they be the Judgment of the Majority, or Society, they have all the Force of human Laws; and if they are converſant only about their Proper Objects, are to be complied with: Otherwiſe, we are not the Subjects, but the Judges or Maſters of the Law. A Man of Virtue will indeed regard the Welfare of the Public in all his Actions, whether it be Matter of Law or not; but legal Commands of lawful Governors, tho' not the beſt in his Opinion, he will generally obſerve, for the Sake of the Authority and Example: and thus the undeſigned Miſchief and Wrong may appear

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and be redreſſed: Tho' in theſe Inſtances, we are to be cautious of acting without a juſt and plain Neceſſity. We are moreover to remember, that Society is natural and beneficial to Men, and hereupon to conſult its Intereſts, to bear its Imperfections, and to ſubject our leſſer Intereſt and private Choice, in proper Inſtances, to its Call and Demands. The public Service is to be attended, as far as, all Circumſtances conſidered of our Place and Ability, as well as the Engagements and Diſpoſitions of others, do require. Indeed Power and Truſt is ſo great a Temptation to the Vanity and Deſigns of Men, that Inſtruments of public Service will ſeldom be wanted; and the Corruptions and Follies of Men are ſo great, that a temperate and virtuous Man finds continual Uneaſineſs from them, in any Attempts for public Good; and is apt to tire with the little Good he his able to do: So that the *general* Management is in no Danger of being neglected, and may ſafely be left to ſuch as are willing enough to undertake it; while no Opportunity is miſſed of repreſenting and redreſſing Wrong, as far as we can; and a Readineſs to take our Share of the public Welfare, is preſerved and practiſed, as Occaſion and Duty may offer. Wiſdom, and Courage, and Integrity, will direct, upon an impartial Inquiry concerning our own Obligations, and the Neceſſity of the

the Public; and thus particular Duties will be discovered. But the nearer Concerns are, in the next Place, SECT. XI.

OBLIGATIONS to our Families, Relations, and Dependents. These are our own proper Cares: and as others have no Interests, so neither have they any great Inclinations, to take these Concerns off from us. Necessity throws these upon us, and Truth requires that we allow their Claim. We are obliged to be faithful to all our voluntary Engagements, and all the Consequences of them. The mutual Confidence that is first freely placed in each other, does strictly oblige us to make each other as happy as we can; to share the common Benefits and Troubles of Life together; to provide for the Necessities and Welfare of our common Stock, and to consult their truest Interests. IV. To Families, Relations, Dependents, mutually.

THESE Duties are reciprocal: Love requires Love: Care, Direction and Advice, require Submission, Obedience and Respect: and all mutual Services and Comforts are to be promoted by every one. I need not mention, how great Prudence and Impartiality ought to be used, in laying the Foundation of all these Obligations; which is left very much to our own Choice: and all the happy Direction that we can wish for, is best se-

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cured by our own Care and Endeavor. How contrary to all this, is the general Motive on which Men purſue this firſt Relation? how partial is their Deſign? and what a trifling Part of this ſocial Happineſs is commonly regarded? Nay, how manifeſt Evils do Men wilfully run into, inſtead of providing for the true Happineſs of this Condition? This Obſervation is as plain, as the natural Reliefs and Joys of a married State are great, and the Anxieties, Sorrows, and Diſcontents of it are common. But theſe Obligations reach beyond ourſelves and our own Fireſide; and extend to our Friends, Neighbours, Acquaintance and Dependents, of all Sorts. Theſe require our Care and Kindneſs, to relieve, aſſiſt, and enjoy; to diſtribute, and preſerve their Rights; and to promote their general Happineſs.

The Caſe of private Friendſhips.

UNDER this Head ſhould be mentioned private Friendſhips, and all ſocial Endearments among Men. Theſe contribute greatly to the Joys and Comforts of Life: But in this imperfect State, and under ſelfiſh Prejudices, they are often alſo great Occaſions of Uneaſineſs and partial Affections. Univerſal Love and Good-will is a nobler Principle, and leſs apt to miſlead us, and does alſo include all private and reaſonable Friendſhip. Reaſon and Truth ſhould direct all our

our Affections; and therefore all unreaſonable Friendſhips or Reſentments proceed from the ſame Cauſe, irregular and unreaſonable Selfiſhneſs. A generous Love to all, and impartial Zeal for univerſal Happineſs, practiſed in all particular Inſtances, is a Principle vaſtly more excellent and godlike, and more uſeful to ourſelves and others, and in which all little Intereſts and Deſigns ought to be abſorbed and extinguiſhed. Man is indeed a Citizen of the World, and belongs to the whole Family of Heaven and Earth; but theſe general Obligations reach no farther, than his Powers and Influences do: and if every Man would look thus far, the World would be ſufficiently eaſy and happy; perhaps more ſo than is conſiſtent with the preſent State of Trial we are deſigned for. However, our Good-will and kind Diſpoſitions ſhould be univerſal, as Men are in general affected by our Actions, with reſpect to their Happineſs; which lays

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V. We are obliged to benefit, what we may, all Individuals.

THE Obligation of conſulting and promoting the Happineſs of all Men. This conſiſts in comporting with our Place and Rank among all Men; in Juſtice, and Faithfulneſs, to their Rights and Intereſts; in ſupplying their Neceſſities; in directing, and aſſiſting them; in affable, and friendly Be-

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haviour and Converſe among them; and, in ſhort, in the Practice of all Virtue; which affects, not only thoſe Actions, which have *their* Happineſs for the immediate Objects of them, but reaches far beyond our Knowledge or Conjecture; and is the Foundation, that is laid, in the original Nature of Things, and is moreover, as we ſhall ſee, conſtituted by the Will of God, to be the Way, to all that Happineſs, which the Univerſe is capable of, and for which, he did deſign it. Under this Head are included all our Obligations of Love and Goodneſs to the Univerſe in general, and to all our Fellow-creatures in particular. Theſe ariſe from our Conſciouſneſs of their Senſibility to Happineſs, and our own natural Capacity and Diſpoſition to promote it; which can only be obſtructed by Selfiſhneſs and Prejudice. It is plainly unreaſonable, to be ſo intent upon our own Pleaſures, as to neglect and forget the Influence we may have on thoſe of others: And were they to act ſo towards us, our own Happineſs would be greatly impaired. Therefore mutual Love and Good-will is the neceſſary Support of the Happineſs of all; and nothing ſhould prevent our advancing the Happineſs of any, but its being contrary to Truth and Reaſon, or its deſtroying more Happineſs of others.

THERE

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Opinions we think contrary to Truth, ought never to be a Ground of Prejudice, in reſpect of this Principle of univerſal Benevolence.

THERE is one Prejudice however ought carefully to be avoided, which is too common, *viz.* any the leaſt Degree of Ill-will, for the Sake of wrong or falſe *Opinions*. Theſe, in themſelves, are plainly neither Virtues nor Vices, and do not at all affect Men's moral Characters; and yet, thro' a falſe Zeal, and bad Principles, have greatly obſtructed their Good-will towards one another. But, upon Examination, it will be found this Prejudice works only in Proportion to Men's want of Integrity and Virtue in themſelves; and that the Love of *Truth* only, not of *right* or *wrong Opinion*, is conſiſtent with the Perfection of Charity. For if Men do *themſelves* depend upon any thing but Integrity, and the Practice of Virtue, (as for Inſtance, upon *being in the Right* in their Perſuaſions, which may be the Caſe of the Virtuous or Vicious;) how can they forbear loving or hating *others*, more or leſs upon this Account? And ſo their Love will be directed, not according to real Merit, but accidental Qualities; and be reſtrained by Men's imaginary Errors, which alſo may be the Effects of Virtue and Integrity in them. The Love of Truth therefore, and the Practice of Righteouſneſs, is that Principle alone, which is capable of, or conſiſtent with univerſal Charity and Good-will. Unity of Opinion there cannot poſſibly be, or ſeem to be, unleſs

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Men were equally wise, and in the same Circumstance of Light; or equally wicked or hypocritical, in making the same Profession. In no Principles therefore can there be Unity among Men, but in the one uniform Principle of the *Love of Truth*. This I take to be the true Unity of Spirit; which, when joined to the Bond of Peace and Righteousness of Life, makes a really virtuous and good Man. This may be worth the Consideration of those who affect a Zeal for Orthodoxy, destructive of Humanity and mutual Affection; and also put some good People upon inquiring, from whence proceeds their inordinate Concern about the right Faith of others; and their Coldness at least, towards those who differ from them. Upon the whole, it is the Duty of all, without Partiality, to consult and advance the universal Happiness, as far as is consistent with Truth and Reason: And those only are capable of practising universal Charity, in its highest Perfection, who themselves have a Dependence upon their Integrity alone, and who are faithful Lovers of Truth.—But I have already, in some measure, prevented the Necessity of saying more, on this Part of our Obligations; and some farther Observations will occur in the remaining Inquiry after Happiness.

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SECTION XII.

Concerning HAPPINESS.

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Happiness generally misunderstood by Men.

HAPPINESS is the great Idol of all the ſenſible World. Not that it is a falſe Purſuit, rightly underſtood; but a *natural* Motive to mere ſenſible Beings, and one reaſonable ſubordinate End of ſenſible moral Agents. I mean, that the Object itſelf, as well as the Way to obtain it, is generally miſtaken and ill judged of, by ſuch as have Reaſon to direct their Inclinations; and hence it becomes an Idol, truly ſo called, as Men purſue mere Imaginations, under the falſe Appearances of Happineſs, which Reaſon and due Conſideration would diſcover; or miſtake it for an ultimate End of rational Beings, which Truth and Reaſonableneſs can only be, becauſe the Faculties of the Underſtanding are ever ſuperior to thoſe of Senſibility; or laſtly, as they take not the right Way and Means of obtaining that real Happineſs which is within their Reach.

Merely ſenſible Beings never miſtaken in the Purſuit thereof.

SUCH Beings as are merely ſenſible, or capable only of comparing Happineſs, neither do, nor can err, in this Matter; for they invariably purſue that Pleaſure, which, at the Time of their Action, appears to them the

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the greateſt: and that Appearance being always determined by their ſeveral Natures and Circumſtances, their Actions muſt be ſuch as the Author of their Beings does deſign: for being incapable of reaſoning at all, they can neither be capable of being juſtified or condemned by Truth or Reaſon; but what they do, is merely natural. Hence, by the different Applications of Pleaſure and Pain, their Actions may be conſtantly directed, by ſuch Beings as have Knowledge of their Natures, and the Diſpoſitions of ſuch Pleaſures and Pains: And ſo may the Actions of all ſenſible Beings, in ſuch Inſtances, wherein the Objects of their Senſibility are ſtrong enough to deſtroy their moral Capacity, or to take away entirely their rational Judgment. This may very often be the Circumſtance of our Action; and wiſe Deſigns may be ſerved thereby: But the Care of the Great Governor of the Univerſe muſt be, to preſerve his moral Subjects from ſuch Violences, ſo far as he expects their reaſonable Obedience.

It is the Aim of all Men, in a greater or leſs degree.

HOWEVER, in Fact, and Experience, Happineſs is the Aim and Deſign of all Men. The Wiſdom of Men appears, or at leaſt is judged of, by little elſe than the greater or leſſer Pleaſures that they deſign, or perhaps only ſucceed in. Thoſe who profeſs to make it their ultimate End, either take Virtue to conſiſt

ſiſt in the Purſuit of Pleaſure; or abandon themſelves to their Appetite and Inclination, without, or againſt, Reaſon. The former Error I have endeavoured to make appear throughout this whole Inquiry; and hope it is ſufficiently plain, that tho' Happineſs may be a reaſonable Purſuit, and therefore an Object of reaſonable Choice or Virtue; yet Reaſon and Truth can alone be the proper End of rational Beings, *as ſuch*, and can never be juſtly conſidered as an Object of Happineſs, or ſubſervient to the Ends of Pleaſure. As to the latter, it is too baſe and mean an Aim to contend againſt: It ſets a Man as much below a Beaſt, as his Capacities are higher and more noble: It is a Practice contemned by thoſe who think at all, however they may be enticed to yield to it: and ſuch as profeſs it openly, would be hardly truſted in the common Affairs of Life.

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BUT tho' all Men do not profeſs the Purſuit of Pleaſure, as their ultimate End; there are few that do not conſtantly regard it in their Actions, and almoſt inſenſibly adhere to Appetite and Inclination. This Practice is plainly juſtifiable, no farther than it is reaſonable. As therefore all rational and ſenſible Beings find in themſelves Inclinations to Happineſs, and cannot but prefer it to Miſery; and while they remain ſenſible, can never

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never be induced to part with their ultimate and final Happineſs, which muſt be truly unreaſonable; and as Reaſon muſt yet neceſſarily judge concerning the Nature and Fitneſs of Actions, that reſpect Pleaſure and Pain; it becomes us to inquire what Pleaſures are fit to be purſued; and how far, and by what Means, they may reaſonably be ſecured.

Final Happineſs muſt be purſued; and that only by Compliance with the Laws of Reaſon.

THE Truth is, tho' Pleaſure and Pain cannot alone conſtitute the Reaſonableneſs of Actions, (that which is reaſonable or fit to be done, not being alterable by Circumſtances of Pleaſure and Pain) unleſs when *they only* conſtitute the Fitneſs; yet no Truth or Reaſon is more clear, than that ſenſible Beings are obliged to ſecure their beſt and final Happineſs; and therefore, that no Reaſon can oblige them to part with it. But then as this final Happineſs is altogether in the Hands of the original and ſupreme Creator and Governor, and every intermediate Inſtance of it; it is the higheſt Folly and Impiety to purſue it by the Breach of any of the Laws of Truth and Reaſon, which are God's Laws: And if there be any preſent or final Inconſiſtence here, between the Practice of Reaſon, and the Happineſs of ſuch ſenſible Beings as act reaſonably, this is to be accounted the Will of the ſupreme Lord of the Univerſe; and therefore,

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all preſent and intermediate Evil that may attend the Practiſers of Virtue, as ſuch, muſt be deſigned for their Good, upon the whole; and their final Happineſs muſt be certain and ſecure: Or elſe, there is a manifeſt Abſurdity in the Natures of ſuch rational and ſenſible Beings, and God their Maker has acted unreaſonably in appointing ſuch a Conſtitution. SECT. XII.

THERE is therefore ſuch preſent Happineſs and Pleaſure to be obtained, as a reaſonable and good Being thinks fit to allow; and a certain final Happineſs to be ſecured, by reaſonable and ſenſible Beings. Let us then carefully inquire a little after that Happineſs which is fit for us, and endeavour to diſcover both its Nature and the Way to it.

The great Bounty of the Creator in the Diſtribution of Happineſs.

IT muſt be allowed, that if the Circumſtances and Capacities of any Being are ſuch, that it does, or may, enjoy, more Pleaſure than Pain, thro' its Duration; tho' it be ever ſo ſmall; God can never be charged as unreaſonable or unkind in creating it: and ſuch Being had received no Injury, but a Favour in its Exiſtence. But then, it ſeems not reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that ſo Great and Good a Being, has been ſparing in his Diſtribution of Happineſs to ſenſible Beings. The vaſt Variety

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riety of Pleaſure and Delight, even in this corrupted World, as well as the Grandeur, Magnificence, and Beauty of thoſe Works of God that we can contemplate, declare rather a Profuſion of Goodneſs and Joy, to be the Deſign of the Creator. He has rather ſurely permitted no Pain in the Univerſe, but what was either needful, for the Good of the whole; or the Conſequence of unreaſonable and voluntary Actions of moral Agents: And theſe alſo he has directed to the higheſt Deſigns of Wiſdom and Goodneſs. But to proceed in our Inquiry:

Happineſs or Pleaſure is a Perception of the Mind, and entirely by the arbitrary Appointment of God.

HAPPINESS, or Pleaſure, which is the ſame, can hardly be defined, ſo that a more adequate Idea of it may be got, than the Words themſelves are uſed to give us. It is a Senſation of Eaſe or Joy, let the Occaſion or Subject be what it will. It is a Perception of the Mind, and nothing elſe; no Object being the neceſſary Cauſe of it, but the Will of God alone. All Pleaſure is true; nor can there be an Idea of falſe Pleaſure; unleſs that mean, Pleaſure attended with greater Pain: But in that Caſe, the Pleaſure is true, and ſo is the Pain. They may be compared, and one may be equal to, more, or leſs, than the other: But all Pleaſure is agreeable; tho' it may be bought too dear, or with more Pain. There are Degrees of Per-

Perception of Pleaſure and Pain; and of Senſibility, which is a Capacity of Happineſs or Miſery. The Objects of Pleaſure or Pain are infinite; ſo are the Degrees and Manners of Senſibility. Perhaps the very ſame Objects, in the ſame Circumſtance, may not equally affect any two Capacities; nay, not any one, at different times. General Ideas of Pleaſure may be framed, but few particular ones. It is hard to make a Judgment of Happineſs, or to compare it accurately, in different Inſtances. To be ſure, we are beſt acquainted with our own; but we have it very little in our Power or Direction: So abſolute a Gift of God is all Happineſs and Pleaſure. SECT. XII.

PLEASURE is therefore to be meaſured, by the Apprehenſions of him that poſſeſſes it; that Senſe itſelf being the true Quantity of Happineſs enjoyed. And hence, we cannot judge but of our own Pleaſure; and Truth only can be a Rule of our Action in reſpect of the Happineſs of others; wherein great Caution is needful. Hence alſo, the Penalties of human Laws cannot be equally diſtributed; becauſe the Subjects of the Pain cannot be fully underſtood, or equally reſpected by their Judges. We know little of the Pleaſures and Pains of other ſorts of Beings; tho' we may have a general Notion of

Every Man's own Apprehenſion the only Meaſure of his Happineſs.

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of thoſe of our own Kind; and particularly of the Senſations of Brutes, we are very ignorant. We ſeem to be much more ſenſible of Pain, than of Pleaſure; and this is ſuitable to our preſent State and Condition; wherein the Main of our Buſineſs is to avoid, or to bear, Evils: and we are accordingly driven to Action, from ſome Uneaſineſs, or Fear of Evil; and the Abſence of Pain makes a great Part of our Pleaſure; as the Senſe of ſuch Freedom or Deliverance is real Happineſs.

Happineſs muſt be according to the general Nature of the Being:

THE Happineſs of every Being muſt be ſuch, as agrees to its Nature and Capacity. Thus, for Inſtance, Reaſon being by Neceſſity a judging and commanding Faculty; no rational Being can be eaſy or happy, in the Practice of what it ſees to be unreaſonable: This Senſe muſt be Pain, however it may be ſtifled and ſuppreſſed; and ſo, unreaſonable Pleaſure may be borne, rather than enjoyed: It is as incongruous as for a Creature, whoſe natural Eaſe is in ſtanding upright, to take Pleaſure in creeping; that is, to be pleaſed contrary to nature; which is plainly abſurd; ſince all Pleaſure is conſtituted in Nature.

Is a Conſtitution of God,

IT ſeems then that Happineſs is a Conſtitution of God, in certain Natures and Circumſtances,

cumſtances, dependent originally, and conſtantly, upon his Will; and Pleaſure and Pain are no other than that State of Senſation of any Being, which God wills, under certain Relations and Actions. Hence it is not only abſurd and fooliſh, to deſign any Pleaſure, without, or againſt, his Will; but all Happineſs is to be ſought for in his Conſtitution and Favour.

SECT. XII. and according to his Will.

THE very different Opinions, and even contrary Notions, that we have of Happineſs and Pleaſure, are ſufficient to ſhew their uncertain Nature. We hardly know what it is, and yet leſs where it is to be found: All profeſs to deſign it, more or leſs; and few or none acknowledge they poſſeſs it: The Purſuit itſelf is almoſt all that we ever attain to, by our own Actions. What *real* Pleaſure we enjoy, is natural; often unlooked for; and always the mere Gift of God.

IT has been thought by ſome, that all Men are equally happy, in every Circumſtance: and I believe, in Fact, few that are in any Meaſure at Eaſe, would exchange their Condition, for the Pleaſures and Pains of another, after comparing them with their own. So peculiar is every one's own Happineſs to Himſelf; and ſo much Error is there commonly, in judging of, and envying Another's.

Outward Things and Circumſtances not the Foundation of it, but the Will of God and our own Diſpoſition.

SECT. XII. The different Circumſtances, in which we ſee Men happy and miſerable; the different Affections of Men, in the ſame Circumſtances, at different times; and the great Variety of Fears and Joys in all; plainly declare that Happineſs and Pleaſure ariſe very little from Things, and Circumſtances themſelves; but depend much on the Temper and Diſpoſition of the Subject; and moſt of all, on the Will of God. But farther,

We cannot judge what would, upon the whole, make us happy; God only can.

A RATIONAL Inquiry after Happineſs, muſt reſpect the whole Duration of that Being which makes it; the preſent or future Time, or perhaps Eternity. This cauſes yet greater Uncertainty in the Matter; and leaves us, in many Inſtances, utterly at a Loſs. Perhaps we may have learned by Experience, that ſomething, within our Reach, would now probably, give us Pleaſure; but, not knowing all its Conſequences, we cannot conclude, upon the whole, that it is good for us: Nay, it does often depend upon the Uſe that other Beings will make of it, as well as we ourſelves. So that, in Truth, a perfect and univerſal Knowledge of Nature, which God only can have, is requiſite to judge and diſpoſe of Happineſs, without Miſtake; and to ſecure any particular Pleaſure.

Happineſs conſiſts

LET it alſo be obſerved, that Happineſs conſiſts

consists greatly in the Supply of Defects. Imperfect Beings therefore are to design it, in the Perfection of their Natures; that is, in the natural Use of all their Capacities, to the best Purposes, and most worthy of their several Natures. Again, Beings are subject to different Kinds and Degrees of Happiness and Misery: So that the Perfection and Destruction of Beings must be according to their Natures; greater, or less considerable, as their Capacities, or Rank in the Creation is. The Destruction of a rational and sensible Mind is vastly greater than that of a mere sensible Being; and so may its Perfection and Happiness be.

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Happiness consists in a Supplial of Defects, and thereby in a perfecting of our Natures; and is in Degree according to the Perfection of the Creature.

If Pleasure or Happiness be necessarily connected with any Nature, Capacity, or Action, it is thought to belong to the Practice of Virtue. I have already declared, that I do not see the necessary Connection, and given my Reasons accordingly: But I allow the *constant* and *certain* Pleasure, that attends such Beings as we are, in the Practice of Reason and Truth, dependent on the Will of God. And this leads me to the Consideration of the Way to Happiness.

Happiness in Fact always does attend Virtue, tho' not necessarily.

SECTION XIII.

Of PRUDENCE *as a Way to Happineſs.*

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Virtue and Prudence the only Means of Happineſs.

THE uncertain and dependent Nature of Pleaſure and Happineſs, appears from the foregoing general Obſervations; and I ſee no poſſible Means of ſecuring them, but the Practice of *Virtue* and *Prudence*. This is as ſurely the Way to Happineſs, as the preſent Conſtitution of Things is intelligible; and as the moral Perfections of God are certain, and to be depended upon. Let us then examine theſe two great and only Means of Happineſs, put into our Hands.

Prudence, what meant by it.

PRUDENCE, is that careful and deliberate Uſe of ourſelves, and all our Powers, and of all things within our Reach; which, by Judgment and Experience, we diſcover, will make us eaſy, and happy in Life. This may indeed be conſidered, as a great Inſtance of Virtue; it being our Duty to make ourſelves as happy in all Conditions as we can: But it is only under the Notion of Wiſdom, and as a Means of preſent Happineſs, that I here conſider it.

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As a Virtue, it equally reſpects the Happineſs of our whole Duration; and in as much as it is already laid down as a Truth, that we are to continue beyond the preſent Life, and conſequently that future Happineſs is of greater Importance than the preſent; therefore the Prudence I ſpeak of, in providing for preſent Happineſs, muſt be careful not to hurt or interrupt our future Expectations. The Practice of Virtue, as ſuch, is the only certain Means of ſecuring that future Happineſs, as will afterwards appear: Prudence is only ſo far limited thereby, as not to tranſgreſs the Laws of Reaſon and Virtue: Nay, the preſent Happineſs of ſuch Beings as we are, muſt principally include the Practice of Virtue; and therefore,

As a Virtue reſpects both preſent and future Happineſs. How far limited.

I SHALL lay it down as the firſt Rule of Prudence, and as neceſſary to our preſent Happineſs, that we preſerve ourſelves innocent, and free from the Senſe of Guilt, and that we live in the Practice of Truth. Tho' Actions are not therefore right or wrong, morally good or evil, as they affect our Happineſs or otherwiſe; yet we are ſo conſtituted, as to be ever uneaſy in the Conſciouſneſs of Guilt, and to have the greateſt Pleaſure in rational Actions. Whatever Shifts unreaſonable and wicked Men make to enjoy Pleaſure, or rather to ſtupify their Senſe of

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Pain; the Conſciouſneſs of Integrity, and the inward Approbation of our own Actions, is a Pleaſure vaſtly ſuperior to any other that we are capable of: and as it has no Alloys of Pain in its Enjoyment and Conſequences, ſo it is naturally of longer Duration than other Pleaſures, dwelling upon the Mind in calm Joys, and returning upon the Memory with the ſame Delight. Without this a Man may be in Miſery, with all other Ingredients of Happineſs; and with it, every Condition is tolerable; and moſt Circumſtances, even without what is called Enjoyments, are happy. Obſerve the peaceful Pleaſures, the calm Delight, and the contented Joy of the virtuous Man, not only without the Abundance of Life, but even under the common Calamities of it; and compare them with the turbulent Purſuits, the buſy and diſcontented Pleaſures of the Unreaſonable and Affluent: Who would not deliberately prefer the former infinitely? Tho' this be not the common Choice; but Paſſions rather influence us in our Conduct.

Its great Importance to our Happineſs.

NUMBERLESS are the Advantages of Innocence to the Happineſs of this Life. He who can well ſupport the common Troubles and conſtant Accidents of Pain in it, goes a great way towards the Eaſe we are here to expect: and what Reliefs are ſo great, and give ſuch Courage

Courage and Hope, as a good Conſcience? It heightens all the natural pleaſing Senſations we may meet with, and alleviates all the Pain that we muſt endure; at the ſame time adding to our Meaſure of Pleaſure, and decreaſing the Weight of Pain. SECT. XIII.

IT were eaſy to judge of the Importance of this one Article in every Pleaſure we can take, but I deſign only to make general Obſervations. This however I muſt add, that the Pleaſures themſelves which conſiſt in the Practice of Virtue, are the greateſt we are capable of enjoying, amidſt the Varieties of Entertainment in our preſent imperfect State; not to mention the Security that is hereby laid for our future Happineſs, and the peculiar Fitneſs of thoſe Pleaſures for the beſt State we can ever attain to.

THAT the Pleaſures of Virtue are ſuperior to any other, is a Demonſtration to the Experience of all that ever felt them; in as much as every one, at the Time he enjoys them, prefers them to all other Delights; and thoſe that feel the conſtant Satisfaction of habitual Virtue, are apt greatly to deſpiſe all lower Pleaſures, and will not part with the leaſt of their Joys for the higheſt Gratifications of Appetite. I reckon that impartial Searches after Truth, faithful and conſtant The ſuperior Pleaſure of Virtue.

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Endeavours to practiſe Reaſon, with an humble Reſignation to the Governor of the Univerſe, make up the greateſt Pleaſures we are here to expect: whence it appears, that there is more Happineſs in every one's Power than is generally imagined; and to what alſo we muſt attribute many Miſeries, that are unreaſonably charged upon the State and Condition in which we are placed.

BUT tho' Integrity and Uprightneſs be a neceſſary Ingredient of our preſent Happineſs; yet the common Uneaſineſs, and very imperfect Joy of many Good Men, plainly ſhew that ſomething more is needful to Happineſs, and that Prudence is farther neceſſary.

The 2d prudential Rule is, to get a fixt habitual Perſuaſion that the whole is under God's Direction.

THE next Rule of Prudence then to ſecure our preſent Happineſs is, to get a ſteady, well-grounded, and habitual Perſuaſion, that all Things and Events are under the Controul and Direction of an almighty, wiſe and good Being, in whoſe Hands we are.

I DESIRE you will remember, that tho' many of theſe Rules of Prudence may be alſo Inſtances of Obedience to Truth, yet that I treat of them here, only under the former Conſideration. To adviſe Men to believe any Principle, in order to obtain any End, is always ridiculous, becauſe Aſſent ever attends Evi-

Evidence, and nothing elſe, and is not in the Power of the Will: and to adviſe Men to believe without Evidence, is fooliſh and abſurd. My Meaning therefore is, that, taking the Propoſition for true, as I have before ſhewn it to be, and conſequently the Aſſent of the Mind to be ever ready upon Conſideration, we ought ſo to fix our Thoughts upon the Nature and Evidence of this Truth, as thereby to make the Perſuaſion more ſenſible and conſtant. SECT. XIII.

The great Importance thereof.

THE Senſe of God's moral Government in the World, would make the Evils of Life appear in quite another Light, and give a vaſt Addition to every Enjoyment in it. The Aſſurance that we have of his perfect Power, Wiſdom and Goodneſs, makes all reaſonable Happineſs to be a juſt Expectation, as the certain Effect of his Will: and as all Unhappineſs, as ſuch, muſt needs be contrary to it, we may be ſure that no more of it will be permitted than is really fit and good upon the whole Account. Amidſt the many Troubles and Calamities of Life that we feel or know, as well as thoſe that we are ignorant of, it is a mighty Comfort to be well aſſured, that they are all under God's Direction: and it heightens greatly the Joys and Pleaſures of Life, to be perſuaded that they are deſigned by his wiſe and good Providence.

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vidence. But the Advantage of theſe Reflections is very much loſt, by a careleſs and negligent Attention to this Truth, which is not ſo much doubted of as diſregarded by the Generality. It is therefore Wiſdom and Prudence to cultivate theſe Principles, and to ſtore our Minds with ſuch Relief under the Uneaſineſs of our Condition, and with ſuch Preparations for increaſing the Comforts and Joys that we may meet with.

A 3d Rule is, to keep a conſtant even, reſolute Poſſeſſion of our own Mind.

ANOTHER Rule neceſſary to the Happineſs of our preſent Circumſtance, is a conſtant Evenneſs and Preſence of Mind in all Events; a certain Superiority of Soul, and Poſſeſſion of ourſelves upon all Occaſions. I confeſs, that this Temper is more or leſs natural to different Perſons; but much of it is to be acquired by Conſideration and Reſolution. A great Part of Prudence, and Virtue too, conſiſts in reſiſting ſome, and encouraging other natural Diſpoſitions. It is a great Felicity to have a natural Eaſe and Calmneſs of Temper: but as it would be abſurd to recommend Endeavours after natural Diſpoſitions; ſo there are peculiar Advantages in rational acquired Habits. Reaſon, which muſt needs be the Foundation of them, is ever the ſame conſtant Relief in the Practice of Virtue; and adds a peculiar Satisfaction, by the Senſe of our acting agreeably to our Natures,

tures, and conforming to the true State of Things conſtituted by our Maker. SECT. XIII.

The Advantage thereof.

IT has ever been accounted a great Part of the Weight of Evils, that they are unexpected: on the other hand, the Follies of Proſperity are much owing to its being unforeſeen. Now, a Mind rightly prepared by due Conſideration of the preſent State of Things, will not be ſurprized at the Events of Time, but will be ready to receive its Share of Pleaſure, without vain and exceſſive Joy; and of Pain and Uneaſineſs, without tormenting Grief, or ſad Deſpair. Indeed to ſuch a one, nothing of either ſort, that can happen here, will appear great enough to move him; his Mind, being ſet upon rational Enjoyments, and fixt in a Dependence on the great Diſpoſer of all Things, is not affected, to any great Degree, by the Changes of Things here only.

THE great Inducement to this Temper is a full Perſuaſion, that Courage and Spirit is the beſt Diſpoſition to bear, or improve any Circumſtance; and that no Trial can be laid upon us, but at the Direction or Permiſſion of God, who expects a ſuitable Behaviour from us. Dejection of Mind takes away all the Abilities that we naturally had to ſupport our Condition, without decreaſing the Weight of

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of any Evil: and if we ſink under any Trial of Life, either our particular State is not provided for in the Government of the Univerſe, or we are wanting to ourſelves. It is plain which is the moſt probable Cauſe.

THIS Temper and Preſence of Mind is true Courage, which tho' it may be much aſſiſted or weakened by a natural Diſpoſition, is nevertheleſs, in a great Meaſure, a Point of Wiſdom, and to be acquired. It is not a raſh and violent Unconcern, but a ſober and calm Steadineſs, equally free from Levity and unbridled Joy on the one Side, and from Sadneſs and dejected Fear on the other. It is eaſy to ſee, how neceſſary it is to our preſent Happineſs. The different Circumſtances of Men, in which their Happineſs or Miſery is commonly thought to conſiſt, do not affect them like the Advantage or Want of this Temper of Mind. We ſee Men in all Conditions happy with it, and uneaſy for want of it. So truly is every one's Happineſs in himſelf; and independent of moſt Things in which Men fooliſhly ſeek it.

It includes Patience under Adverſity; Moderation

IN this part of Prudence is contained Patience and Submiſſion, without Anxiety or Deſpair, under the unavoidable Troubles and Miſeries of Life, as well as Moderation and Humility in the Proſperity and Joys that we meet

meet with; and, in general, that Sobriety and Contentment without which we ſoon loſe the Poſſeſſion of ourſelves, and become ſubject to every Change of Fortune, and make our Happineſs very uncertain. SECT. XIII. in Proſperity.

WE ſhould hereupon be equally careful to avoid indolent Inactivity, and precipitant confuſed Attempts. We ought always to have Ends before us worthy of our Care and Endeavours; and we can never be ſo involved, but Time and Application may make us ſucceſsful. The firſt Appearances of Things, if they are apt to ſurpriſe and deceive our natural Temper, ſhould be received with Patience and Attention. The Hurry of the Mind will ſubſide, and the falſe Views of Things diſappear. The Art of Action conſiſts not in ſudden Attempts, but in Conſtancy and Reſolution. And excludes Inactivity, and Precipitancy.

I SHOULD here mention the conſtant Government over our Paſſions. Theſe are very uneaſy Senſations, when they are not under the Dominion of Reaſon. How apt are Men to be the conſtant Sport of indulged Paſſions; that well directed, were deſigned to advance their Happineſs? So that Self-government has a double Influence upon our Happineſs; both to prevent the Pain that unbridled Appetite would produce, and to obtain the Pleaſure The Neceſſity of governing our Paſſions.

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ſure that natural Inclination was deſigned to afford us.

This how compaſſed.

A MIND that is calm, and undiſturbed with Paſſion, is beſt prepared to make the moſt of Life; to diſcern its real Intereſts and to obtain its Ends. The way is, to obſerve our own natural Tempers, and the Occaſions of thoſe inward Emotions, that we have by Experience found violent and unreaſonable; to avoid them, and get well inſtructed and fortified againſt them by Care and Reſolution; to habituate ourſelves to act rationally and upon Reflection; to be ſenſible of our Weakneſs, and thereupon to reſerve ourſelves to Judgment and Deſign; to weigh well the Folly of all unreaſonable Paſſion, and the ſad Effects of it, as well as the vaſt Advantage of being free from it, whatever our Aims are; to ſtop and ſuſpect our Actions, when the Motives are quick and ſtrong, and when we do not plainly ſee the Reaſons of them. Theſe Methods, and ſuch other as Reaſon and the Truth of the Caſe will ſuggeſt, may be uſeful to ſuppreſs undue Paſſions, and to preſerve our Calm and Happineſs.

PLEASURE and Pain are the Foundations of Paſſion; and all Actions are ſuſpicious that are done from theſe Motives ſolely or principally, as they interrupt the Practice of Reaſon;

ſon; in which the Happineſs of a reaſonable Being muſt conſiſt. SECT. XIII.

IT is true, that after all our Endeavours, we are weak and very imperfect Beings; apt to be elevated or depreſſed with ſmall Things; ſubject to many Impreſſions both in Body and Mind that we cannot provide againſt, or eaſily deliver ourſelves from. Natural Infirmities and unavoidable Evils muſt be born and ſubmitted to; nor can we expect, by the greateſt Prudence, or even Virtue, to get above our Natures and Circumſtances. All we can do is to exert our Powers, as firmly and conſtantly as we are able, thereby employing the Strength we have; and, in a Senſe of our real Weakneſs, and the unknown Danger to which we are expoſed, to recommend ourſelves, by the Practice of our Duty, to that mighty Being, who knows our Natures and Circumſtances, and is the wiſe Diſpoſer of all things. I am aware how inſufficient to Happineſs the beſt Rules of Prudence alone may be; and how neceſſarily we ſhall be reduced, for the moſt part, to a Dependence on God for it; nay, that originally and properly there is no Happineſs but from him. This will only lead us to the other Means I propoſed, and make the Practice of Virtue neceſſary to our Happineſs. However, Prudence is not without its Uſe, in Subordination to

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to Virtue; and directs us to many probable Means and Objects of Pleaſure in our preſent State. Allowing therefore the Neceſſity of Virtue in order to our Happineſs, and deſiring it may be always remembered, I will go on to mention ſome other Rules of Prudence.

A 4th Rule is, that we conform ourſelves in our Actions to our Condition in Life.

IT is neceſſary then to our preſent Eaſe and Happineſs, that we conform ourſelves to our Condition in Life. Our Actions ought to be ſuch as our particular Circumſtances require. However good they may be in themſelves, or proper to other Relations, if they ſuit not thoſe in which we ſtand, they cannot be agreeable or happy to us. If our Aims are below our Powers, we loſe Pleaſures that we might enjoy: If above, they are in vain, and bring only Shame and Diſappointment, which are very uneaſy Affections. We cannot poſſeſs ourſelves, or be Maſters of our Actions, unleſs our Deſigns are within our Compaſs, and our Aims are proportioned to our Capacities. It is plain this can only be done, by applying our Minds and Intentions to our Circumſtances. Our State, and Condition, and Relations in Life, depend not upon us; they are what our Natures and the Diſpoſition of Things about us conſtitute, undeſigned and unalterable by us: But we may ſuit our Deſigns and Actions to them;

and

and in this Conformity conſiſts much of the Succeſs and Pleaſures that we are to expect. It is evident no Circumſtance or Relation can be ſuch, but our Actions may agree or diſagree with them; ſo that no Circumſtance can ſecure us the Happineſs which alone depends upon our Conformity to them; and therefore, in Fact, we ſee Men happy and miſerable in all. SECT. XIII.

Happineſs, in the different Stations of Life, how dependent upon this Conformity.

A GREAT part of Mankind are, as it were, driven by their Condition to the main Actions of their Life, and have little Room left for Judgment and Deſign. They have enough to do to provide for the common Calls of Nature in themſelves, and in their Families. Theſe may practiſe Virtue by an actual Submiſſion to their Neceſſities, and have the Advantage of a plain Rule, and little Doubt concerning their Behaviour; they are ſeldom at Leiſure to err much, and therefore do generally conform to their Circumſtances. Hence they are, for the moſt part, if honeſt, chearful and eaſy in conſtant neceſſary Conformity to their Condition in Life; and, excepting a few Inſtances of extreme Poverty or Sickneſs, or uncommon Sloth and Stupidity, they have a large Share of preſent Happineſs, which is little more than what Contentment and Induſtry will ſupply. It may be added, that Men's Minds are remarkably

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bent and inured, as I may ſay, to their Conditions, in Circumſtances that appear to others ſad and melancholy; ſo that they are more at Eaſe than we perceive; and they ſeem little ſenſible of the Pains we often imagine for them. As Men are farther removed from this Neceſſity, their whole Action and Behaviour lies more under Judgment and Choice, and ſo more Room is left for Error and Vice. They have Time to attend their Inclinations; which tho' uſeful Excitements in their natural State, are apt to miſlead, if Reaſon keep not the Aſcendant. Hence Covetouſneſs, Ambition, Pride, Luxury, Intemperance and other Paſſions take Place; each of which conſult only their ſeveral particular Appetites, and not the whole Condition and Relation of the Agent; and ſo produce Actions that are not conformable to the whole, and conſequently uneaſy and painful. Therefore it is that we ſee ſuch Variety of Happineſs and Miſery among Men of free and large Circumſtances. Error and Paſſion have Room to take Effect, and for want of Reaſon and Virtue ſome Men become unhappy by the Contradiction of their Actions and Circumſtances; while others in the ſame State, by the Opportunity and Practice of a

* In the next Sentence in the MS. Copy ſomething is evidently left out by Miſtake. The Editor has here omitted

more exalted Virtue, become excellent and happy. Hence alſo Men of low Condition in Life, whoſe Appetites are more neceſſarily confined, and whoſe Inſtances of Virtue are more plainly preſcribed by their Circumſtances, in Occaſions of uncommon Freedom and Choice, are very apt to act unreaſonably:* SECT. XIII.

CONFORMITY to our Circumſtances is neceſſary to Happineſs, and therefore every Man is to weigh and conſider his own. It is great Folly and Loſs of Advantage to act below our Capacities, and not to uſe the real Powers we have. Thus what might give us Pleaſure in the Uſe, may be a Burthen in the mere Poſſeſſion only; and we loſe a real Enjoyment to provide for a contingent and improbable Neceſſity. But the greateſt and moſt common Miſtakes are on the other Side, looking up at higher Circumſtances and conforming our Actions to them; not to our own. This cannot but make us unhappy. The Behaviour itſelf ſits uneaſy upon us, and ends in the Loſs of what we really had. The former ſeems rather a Defect in the Management of our Happineſs; this is a poſitive Pain. It is a ſort of creating of Neceſſities, by the Art of imagining them. It may be worth while

The Wiſdom of this Conformity; the Folly of the want of it.

omitted the whole of it, as he apprehended this might be done without interrupting the Thread of the Diſcourſe.

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to conſider the real Neceſſities of Life; how few and ſmall they are; and when they are ſupplied, the reſt is mere Imagination. A Man cannot help feeling real Wants; but what is commonly thought neceſſary to Happineſs, may be vaſtly contracted, by cutting off what Neceſſities our Fancies alone create. This great Advantage too would be gained, that by bringing our Neceſſities, by a true Judgment, into a juſt and narrow Compaſs, we might leave ourſelves the greater Freedom, as our Circumſtances would allow, for a voluntary Conformity to our Condition, which is the Practice of Reaſon; and thus we ſhould get the Pleaſures of this Agreement, and thoſe of Virtue and Reaſon too.

The Difficulty of judging for another in reſpect of this Conformity.

WISDOM and Integrity are indeed ever needful to make a true Judgment in any Condition. Gain and Profit is neceſſary to be intended in Proportion to the real Streightneſs of our Circumſtances: Beneficence, Generoſity and Charity, in Proportion to our real Capacities and Abundance; and none can ſay for another, but in extraordinary and very plain Caſes, that he is poor or rich, frugal or profuſe, covetous or extravagant; the *whole* Relation and Truth of every Man's Caſe being only known to himſelf; and not to himſelf, without great Impartiality and Faithfulneſs. In this reſpect the Vices of Covetouſneſs

neſs and Hypocriſy are very much alike, that they are generally ſecret and undiſcoverable by Men; and therefore they are moſt apt to misjudge one another concerning them; and it is obſervable, that no Virtues have ever been ſufficient to ſecure the beſt Characters from the Cenſures of their Enemies; and the juſteſt Condemnation may be jointly paſſed on theſe Vices ſo intimate to the Conſciences of the Tranſgreſſors alone. SECT. XIII.

IT were eaſy under this Head to enlarge, as it reſpects the main Conduct of Life. The Purſuit and Deſigns of Men are infinite. We ſeem naturally diſpoſed to make new Attempts. I ſuppoſe the Buſineſs of Life would not be ſo well carried on without this Temper. But let us ſometimes ſtand ſtill, and conſider what we are looking after, and what we have already. We are apt to be blind towards what we have, or intent only on Things in proſpect. The Art of Happineſs would be greatly improved, by taking in only the Enjoyments that are really about us. Almoſt every Condition is ſuch, that there are many who think they ſhould be compleatly happy in it, whilſt thoſe that poſſeſs it, ſtay not to taſte of any of its Joys, but anxiouſly preſs after another. The Truth is, there are few Circumſtances in Life, without many Comforts in general, and ſome alſo peculiar

The great Art of Happineſs conſiſts in this Conformity to our preſent Circumſtances.

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to them only; but for want of Conformity to them, that is, of enjoying them, Men complain and are unhappy in all.

Which yet excludes not a reasonable Pursuit after better.

CONTENTMENT excludes not a rational Ambition. A just Enjoyment of the Comforts of any State is very consistent with a calm and reasonable Design of a better: nay, this is one Ingredient in the Happiness of every Condition, a Temper natural and obligatory on all imperfect Beings in every State. But I fear I shall out-go my general Design, by too much notice of Particulars.

A 5th Rule of Prudence consists in keeping ourselves under constant Employment.

CONSTANT Action and Employment may be added as another Rule of Prudence towards a happy Life. We are naturally active. The Mind is apt to be uneasy merely thro' Inactivity, and in Action to forget real Uneasiness: besides, Sloth is the Neglect of some Good that we might do; and to propose some Good by our Action, is naturally pleasing. There is a sort of Virtue in constant Engagement. The Necessities and Conveniences of Life carry the Generality to Action, tho' indeed indulged Sloth will bear a great deal. But where Circumstances afford a Liberty and Choice of Behaviour, much Prudence is requisite to the due Observance of this Rule. It seems necessary to take Care, first, to allow of no Inactivity or Sloth, and then to consult the best

beſt Engagement, that our Tempers and Capacities will ſuit. SECT. XIII.

An Habit of Induſtry a great Ingredient in Happineſs.

HABITS of Induſtry are great Foundations of Happineſs, and theſe are laid very much in Education and Examples. Children that are in Health ſhew the natural Activity of our Make, by a conſtant Buſyneſs, and inceſſant Application to ſomething. This natural Diſpoſition, happily directed, may lay the Grounds of great Uſefulneſs and Pleaſure. When this has been neglected, and Leiſure and Opportunity allow, there is extreme Danger of Sloth, or vicious Application, and the Recovery can only be by Reſolution and Conſideration. Sometimes ſtrong Paſſions preſerve the Activity of Men; but are very dangerous, and often end in Miſchief to ourſelves and others. A ſober and careful, deliberate and wiſe Application to the moſt uſeful and honourable Engagements that we can reach, is a great Virtue, and no leſs a ſure Means of conſtant Pleaſure and Happineſs.

A 6th Rule is, to cultivate in ourſelves a Principle of Univerſal Benevolence.

ANOTHER Rule of Happineſs is, to get a general Love and Good-will for the whole Creation; and to cultivate Benevolence in ourſelves as much as we are able. It is a moſt natural and kindly Affection, however ſome Men, thro' falſe Intereſt or Principle, have ſtifled it and deſtroyed it. Hereby we

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ſhall always have ſome Occaſion of Joy. And tho' the Pains and Miſeries of Men will, for the ſame Reaſon, affect us too, yet will our Pleaſures greatly exceed our Uneaſineſs; as the general Diſtributions of Providence are full of Goodneſs; and Happineſs, upon the whole, is certainly the Deſign of the Creator, in which therefore, finally however, we may ſecurely rejoice.

How much ſweeter are our loving than our hateful Affections! The World is not ſo miſerable by the Effects of Hatred and Ill-will, miſerable as it is, as the Authors of them are; in as much as external Calamities are ever leſs than inward and tormenting Paſſions.

This a Source of our compleateſt Happineſs.

It is Prudence to be well diſpoſed to all about us for our own Sakes, and to cultivate public Affections with Care, leſt private Intereſts overcome and deſtroy them. Few are without ſuch an Affection, but in ſome it is ſo reſtrained and ſelfiſh, that it is hardly worthy of that Name. It ſhould be as general and extenſive, as our Powers are. Much Zeal is due to natural Affection, more to Friendſhip, but moſt of all to Charity and univerſal Benevolence. No Pleaſure is ſo great and laſting as that of diſtributing Happineſs to others. We cannot have ſo much Happineſs beſtowed upon us, (the Gifts of God only excepted, which

which all our Capacities are) as we are capable of in making others happy: ſo much more happy is it to give than to receive, by the very Conſtitution of our Natures. A great part of our Pleaſures are ſuſpended upon our Communications of Pleaſures to our Fellow-Creatures; and to be Subjects of Happineſs ourſelves, we muſt improve our Love to others, and be full of Friendſhip and Good-will to the whole Creation of God.—But all the Advantages of Love and Charity are too comprehenſive to be taken notice of. Men are generally careleſs on this Head, to ſay no more; and not apt to deſign their own Happineſs by this Means. Were they throughly convinced how much it depends upon doing good to others, great as the Duty is, they would be carried to it from mere Regard to Intereſt: And it is to be feared, that too great a part of the Benevolence that is practiſed among Men, is owing barely to that Pleaſure and Joy which, by Nature, they feel in it, and alone propoſe by it. So wiſe and kind has our Creator been in the Conſtitution of Things. SECT. XIII.

IT is another neceſſary Rule of Prudence, to be prepared and fortified againſt the common and inevitable Calamities of Life, and what are reckoned the Evils of it. Thoſe indeed ought not to be accounted Evils that are

A 7th Rule is, to prepare ourſelves with ſuch Conſide-

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rations as may help to remove or alleviate the unavoidable Evils of Life.

are needful for us, and tend to our real Happineſs, tho' they may be grievous for the preſent. They are capable of great Relief, from due Conſideration. There is no real Evil but the Miſery of Guilt, and the painful Effects of Vice; and againſt this, there is no poſſible Remedy, but in the Divine Mercy and Forgiveneſs: of which, by the way, there can be no *perfect* Aſſurance, but by a Revelation from God, as it muſt proceed from his own free Favour. All other Evils are either Imperfections of our Natures and Conditions, of which we cannot juſtly complain; or preſent Pains, inflicted or permitted for our Good; ſo that we are to blame, if we are not the better for them. This can only be brought about by conſidering and attending to their Natures and Deſigns, and by conforming to them in our Actions.

The Neceſſity of ſo doing.

Now the common Calamities of Life to which we are expoſed, and ſome of which are inevitably to be undergone by us, not to mention the Particulars that theſe include, are in general, *Poverty*, *Diſgrace*, *Pain* and *Sickneſs*, *Sorrow*, and *Death*. We can never expect to be happy in Life, unleſs we are duly guarded againſt theſe; ſome of which, more or leſs, we muſt partake of, as well as certainly undergo the laſt. The Troubles and Misfortunes of Life are ſo thickly

ſown,

ſown, that they are ever ſpringing up to engage us; ſo that our Lives muſt be very uncomfortable, if we are not prepared to receive them: our Joys will ever be interrupted, and our Pains will conſtantly oppreſs us: there will be no Calm, or Security in our Minds; but, being ever under real Trouble, or the Fear of it, our Lives will be full of Anxiety and Pain. But he that is prepared for Evil, will never be ſurpriſed; but, wiſely and reſolutely ſubmiting to unavoidable Griefs, will ſupport himſelf, and improve them; while his real Joys will not be interrupted with Fears, nor his true Happineſs be uncertain or in Danger. SECT. XIII.

THE general Relief that there is againſt all theſe, is in the Wiſdom, Power, and Goodneſs of the univerſal Governor, and our Subjection and Obedience to him; together with an humble Expectation of our Share in the common Troubles of our preſent State, and Reſignation to it. All which I have before in ſome Meaſure ſpoken to: but there are ſome more particular Conſiderations proper to each of theſe,

POVERTY is ſeldom ſuffered but in Compariſon. The Folly and Vanity of Men create or increaſe this Evil, for the moſt part; and a Conformity to our true Circumſtance, as Poverty. Proper Conſiderations of Comfort under real

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as I ſaid before, would be generally a ſufficient Relief. Want of ſuch Enjoyment as we have been uſed to, tho' others are perfectly eaſy without them, is one ſenſible Degree of Poverty. This, Time and Reflection will naturally remove, if we are wiſe. Perhaps we may be really happier without ſome Things that we fancied made us ſo; or we may find Comforts that we were before Strangers to. Hitherto may be referred ſuch Loſſes and Calamities as affect our worldly Subſtance. They are to be expected in common and in Proportion to our Poſſeſſions. Care and Prudence will prevent many of theſe, and Patience and Reſignation will ſupport us under ſuch as are not extreme. A juſt Diſtinction ſhould always be obſerved between ſuch as only decreaſe our Superfluity, and thoſe which really bring on us ſome Degree of Neceſſity. A Man's Life and Happineſs, moſt certainly, does not conſiſt in Abundance. Pride and Idleneſs are the main Fuel of that Uneaſineſs, which moſt Degrees of what is called Poverty occaſion; the Remedies of which it is eaſy to ſee before.

REAL and extreme Poverty, which is the want of what Nature demands, and Neceſſity preſſes for, is truly compaſſionable. I hope and believe that this is very rare, but where Men can plainly charge it upon their own Vices

Vices and Follies. A continual Dependence from day to day upon the uncertain Beneficence of others, or our own Capacities, that may indeed fail us, while the needful Supplies nevertheleſs continue to come in, is commonly no uneaſy Condition. Conſtant Induſtry and Employment, with long tried Succeſs, tho' very moderate, give a chearful Confidence and Courage, more lively, and greater than what we call the certain Proviſions of Life: not to mention the pleaſing Experience of remarkable Interpoſitions of Providence, that the Obſervations of an humble and virtuous Mind afford. After all, where preſſing Neceſſity takes place, and no ſufficient Supply can lawfully be got, Patience and Submiſſion is the Rule, as to inevitable Suffering, which is the Will of God in that Caſe. The Proſpect of a poſſible or probable Change in our Condition, may ſomewhat relieve us: the certain Shortneſs of all preſent Evils, eſpecially if they be great; the Government of God in the World; a Conſciouſneſs of Integrity; and an humble Reſignation of Mind, with the inward Support, that in ſuch extraordinary Caſes may perhaps be given; all theſe together may animate us beyond our Knowledge or Imagination.

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DISGRACE is an Evil the beſt of Men are expoſed to; tho' indeed, bad as the World

Under Diſgrace.

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World is, true Merit will find a general Applauſe. Common Praiſe is ſo poor a Thing, when throughly examined, that a wiſe Man will hardly accept of it; much leſs ſet his Heart upon it. The Favour and Contempt of the World are generally ſo ill grounded and ſo miſplaced, that they are almoſt indifferent to a conſidering Man. I had not therefore reckoned Diſgrace among the Evils of Life, but that there is an innocent and uſeful Tenderneſs and Senſibility in human Nature, and perhaps moſt of it in the beſt Men, under the unreaſonable and ungrateful Returns of their Fellow-Creatures. It is truly grievous to ſee ſome Inſtances of this Abuſe in the World, and a great Diſcouragement to Beneficence. The Love of Praiſe, and the ſenſible Obligations of Gratitude, are no doubt deſigned by our wiſe Creator to be Motives to ſeek each others Happineſs, by the Effects of our mutual Good-will: and it is ſometimes very hard for a kind and good Nature and Behaviour to meet with the undue Returns of Inſenſibility, Reproach and Hatred, that are common in Life: but after all, it is a ſmall Evil, and is moſt felt thro' our own unreaſonable Paſſion, and vain Ambition. Were we free from Pride, a little Reſpect would ſatisfy us, and appear equal to our Deſerts. Humility would take off the greateſt Sting of Diſgrace: and as it is ever accompanied

nied with Innocence and Virtue, but where it is deſerved, and therefore an Evil of our own making; there are the greateſt Supports to be had under it. SECT. XIII.

THE ill Uſage that we meet with in the Courſe of Life, is ſeldom more than is neceſſary to curb our Vanity, and to preſerve us from the Infection of human Praiſe, which, as far as it prevails, is directly oppoſite to the Love of Truth. For how can we be impartial, if we receive Honour one of another? and indeed there needs little more to be ſaid for our Relief and Aſſiſtance againſt this Evil.

BUT if we would conſider the falſe Rules of judging among Men; their common Ignorance of true Merit; the wrong Faſhion of Reſpect when it is ſhewn; the Vanity of our own Minds, who are apt to expect it unreaſonably; the many Inſtances, wherein it is the trueſt Honour to be neglected; the Danger and Envy that attends it; the Emptineſs of the greateſt Honour, when we come to poſſeſs it; and above all, the Nature of true Honour, which cometh from God only, and which is eaſy and ſure in the Purſuit, being only the Senſe of our own Integrity, in an humble Appeal to him who knows our Hearts; I ſay, did we but conſider all this, the

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the Applauſe of the whole World would be little in our Account, and the ſmall Portion of it that can here befall us, would be intirely diſregarded; while our Hearts were ſet upon higher and more real Honour.

THE Emptineſs of all human Praiſe is beſt ſeen by conſidering the Nature of Praiſe, when applied to God; or that Senſe, or Reſentment of Praiſe, that may be ſuppoſed to be in the Divine Mind. We muſt have new Ideas to it, if we would juſtly attribute it to Him. The only Reaſon that we can ſee of deſiring it is, either to encreaſe our Power and Freedom from Miſchiefs, or to give an additional Teſtimony to the Approbation of our own Conſciences; and ſo is founded on mere Want and Defect. It can therefore have no Place in God, and ſhould have little in wiſe and virtuous Men.

HOWEVER if we would be happy here, we muſt be free from Diſgrace, or able to ſupport ourſelves under it. The former cannot be expected amidſt the uncertain Humours of Men: the latter we ſee is practicable and reaſonable. Exceſſive Love of Praiſe is very tormenting, and open to Diſappointment. We muſt be at ſome ſettled Point, to be tollerably eaſy in the World. The Art is, to act ſo as to deſerve all Men's Praiſe,

Praiſe, and yet to be duely indifferent towards it: ſo ſhall we probably have our Share in their Good-will, and as much of it as is fit for us, which we ſhall alſo know how to value: however, we ſhall ſecure our own private Satisfaction, and the Approbation of our Great Judge; which will render human Praiſe very inſignificant to us, and any preſent Diſgrace tolerable. SECT. XIII.

Under Pain and Sickneſs.

PAIN and *Sickneſs* are very common Attendants upon human Life. The beſt Capacities and moſt virtuous Minds are not exempt, but rather greater Partakers of them than others, if we may conclude from Experience: I mean ſuch as are not the natural Effects of Vice and Intemperance. Whether they are proper Occaſions of the Exerciſe of Virtue, or needful to temper the Vanity and Inconſideration of the preſent State; they have however been always far from being reckoned diſhonourable. They are often rather Marks of the Favour and Care of Providence, and give the Mind an happy Turn. They are certainly the proper Calamities and Sufferings of Life, and tend in their Natures to give the Mind Uneaſineſs and Diſpleaſure. It is therefore great Prudence, as well as our Duty, to guard againſt them, and to provide ourſelves Supports under them. Indeed the Seeds of

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much Pain and Sickneſs may be rooted in our Conſtitution and neceſſary to our Circumſtance, and ſo altogether paſt our Care to prevent: Temperance and Caution is all the Proviſion we can make, which often fail too; tho' how much additional Weight this Virtue and Prudence may keep off, we are not always aware of. When we are actually oppreſſed with Pain and Sickneſs, after all the natural Remedies are cautiouſly and faithfully applied, which are fewer and more common, I believe, than we are ready to imagine, I know no Remedy, but Patience and Reſignation to the Will of our juſt and good Diſpoſer. There is great Reaſon for theſe. Patience will really lighten our Burthen, and give us Strength to bear it. It is a rational and manly Temper. Theſe Evils are ſeldom ſharp and long, or Life itſelf is ſoon over, when they muſt end: and Pain and Sickneſs do naturally diſpoſe the Mind, and as it were bend it to a Temper of Reſt and Patience under long Sufferings. In the mean time, a virtuous Man ſtruggling with the Burthens of Nature, and the Difficulties of the preſent State, in the Practice of Reaſon as far as he is able, is a noble Object of the divine Regard, and as ſuch poſſeſſes a pleaſing Conſciouſneſs of his own unmoved Integrity, and Aſſurance of the Approbation of his Maker and Judge.

Judge. Reſignation is a Conſequence of this patient Diſpoſition, and affords a happy Calm not to be equaled by this World's Joys. SECT. XIII.

I MUST not here omit to mention a moſt uneaſy Affection of the Mind, which I cannot but rank under natural Pains and Diſorders. It is a certain *Melancholy* and Dejection of the Spirits, ariſing, I ſuppoſe, from ſome natural and occaſional Temperature of the Body that affects the Mind more immediately, or elſe perhaps the Effect of ſome permitted Action of an unknown Agent upon us. Whatever be the Cauſe, the Diſpoſition ſeems perfectly involuntary, and natural with reſpect to us, as Pain and Sickneſs do: for it neither attends more or leſs Degrees of Reaſon and Underſtanding, virtuous or vicious Minds; unleſs perhaps more paſſionate and healthy Conſtitutions are moſt free from it, as Experience ſeems to teſtify; conſtant and ſudden Engagements of Mind, or real Pain and great Uneaſineſs of Body under natural Strength, taking off the Mind from ſuch Reflections. The Temper however is ſufficiently known to thoſe that feel it, and perhaps the Occaſions too, and ſome partial and immediate Cauſes of it. To others it need not be more particularly deſcribed. Few ſedentary and thinking Men are free from it, tho' it cannot be owing to Thought and

Under melancholy Dejections.

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Inactivity, any farther than Health in general is promoted by Exerciſe; much leſs is Wiſdom or Virtue a natural Cauſe or Conſequence of it; tho' Thought and Reflection are indeed the Subjects of this Diſorder: ſo that, I confeſs, it ſeems an Evil proper to correct, and influence the more retired and thoughtful ſort of Men. It is a natural Pain however that we are expoſed to, and perhaps one of the hardeſt to bear, and muſt be ſubmitted to, tho' not indulged. It muſt be endured with Patience, and looked upon as natural. Time, Endeavour, and new Engagements may relieve us. Reaſon muſt be exerted, as far as we are able; but we muſt not expect it will deliver us. It may be right under this Diſorder, to reſolve, in the Intervals of Relief, on the neceſſary Buſineſs of Life, and to purſue it afterwards without Doubt and Wavering. Exerciſe and Employment ſeem the only Relief; and when it ſtill prevails, a ſilent Submiſſion to our imperfect State, in hopes that ſome ſeaſonable Deliverance will ariſe. The Diſorder is indeed ſometimes ſadly affecting, and ſeems capable of being raiſed to the greateſt Degree of Torment that can be inflicted upon us. But this, with all other Pain, is in the Hands of that Being who knows our Frame, and is ever ready to aſſiſt and relieve us.

SORROW is a very tender Affection of the Mind, and this World is full of Subjects and Occaſions of Grief and Trouble. It was not deſigned for a State of Happineſs. It would not then have been filled with ſo many Scenes of Sorrow. We ourſelves are only paſſing through it, and therefore the Changes and Alterations of preſent Things that diſquiet us, are ſuitable to our State and Condition; proper to prevent our reſting in them, and taking too great hold of Life; and to remind us of the End of Life here. I ſhall not pretend to enumerate the Occaſions of Sorrow that ſurround us: it would be too melancholy and tedious a Taſk. Every Man's Experience is ſufficient, and the general Topics are open to every one's Reflection; if his own particular Sorrows leave him room for the Speculation. The general Miſery of Mankind; or at leaſt their low State of Virtue and Happineſs; the conſtant Violations of Truth and Reaſon, in the common Actions of Men; the Abuſe of Power, and Slavery of Oppreſſions; numberleſs Calamities of Poverty, Sickneſs and Diſtreſs: and then of more private Concern; the Injuries, Unkindneſs and Ingratitude; not to ſay the Cruelties of Men; the Diſappointments and Misfortunes of every Deſire and Condition; the Grief, or Trouble, or Sorrow, that every Object of our Love, or Care, or Eſteem, expoſes

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us to, in their Infirmities, Afflictions, Miſcarriages, or Deaths: All theſe, and many more, make but a dark Scene, and afford us but a gloomy Enjoyment: and theſe are the common Lot of Men, in which we muſt expect our Share; and againſt which we ought to be prepared.

THE Remedies againſt theſe Evils are, a very moderate and low Expectation of Happineſs here. A little Conſideration will make this appear very reaſonable, becauſe it is the plain Truth of the Caſe. Thus Trouble and Sorrow will not ſurpriſe us, and Joys will be a more ſenſible Gain. Another Art to this Purpoſe is, to keep our Affections and ſettled Enjoyments off from theſe uncertain Things. We make Sorrow to ourſelves by fixing upon uncertain Things for Joy and Satisfaction. Thoſe Comforts which the World affords us ſhould be taken with Thankfulneſs and Caution, accepted as Inſtances of Bounty, not to be depended on. Such are all the Enjoyments of Life, ſuch our neareſt and beſt Comforts, ſuch eſpecially are the Advantages of wiſe and virtuous Friendſhips. They are to be uſed with Care and Induſtry, thankfully poſſeſſed, and chearfully reſigned.

I MAY add, as the moſt effectual Remedy of Sorrow, the due Conſideration of the whole

whole true State of Things, without confining our Thoughts to the preſent World. The Nature, and Perfections, and Government of God; the certain Immortality of all rational Beings; the Shortneſs of all preſent Scenes, in Compariſon of our whole Duration; the grand Deſign of the univerſal Lord, of which theſe little Concerns are however a Part, and to which they tend; and the End of all theſe Things that is at hand. A Mind thus prepared will be Even under all theſe Changes; and, in the Poſſeſſion of Truth, and the Conſciouſneſs of Integrity, may ſupport theſe Evils, and finiſh its Courſe with Approbation and Joy. SECT. XIII.

DEATH is the laſt Evil that we are to contend with, and an inevitable one. The Pains and Sorrows that generally accompany this Change were conſidered before. That only which we are now concerned in, is the Alteration of our State by Death, when we ſhall here ceaſe to be, and begin to exiſt in another World. And in reſpect of Death.

THIS cannot indeed be an Evil to any One, which is common to All: for the wiſe and good Governor of the World would not have appointed an univerſal and inevitable Evil. If Death be an Evil, it muſt conſiſt, either in the Loſs of ſomething we are to

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leave here behind us, or in ſome new Miſery of that other State. Now I believe a wiſe and good Man, upon mature Deliberation, concerning the Happineſs of this World, and all the Uncertainty, Imperfection and Trouble of it, would be aſhamed to complain of the Loſs of any thing here by Death; eſpecially after having had a tireſome Round of the ſame Vanities for a long time, and perhaps not only having loſt the greateſt Joys in Life and the Reliſh of them too, but feeling apace the Weight of Infirmities and the Signs of Diſſolution coming on; and moſt of all, if the Pains and Troubles of Life have long diſquieted him, and made him at leaſt indifferent to a longer Stay.

THE Miſeries of an After-ſtate, muſt either be a mere ignorant Fancy without any Ground, or a Conſciouſneſs of Guilt. If we ſee no Reaſon to expect any future Exiſtence at all, it is very great Folly to fear any Evil to come after Death: if it is reaſonable to expect a future Duration, how can we fear leſt a wiſe, and righteous, and good Being, ſhould deſign it to be leſs happy than this? Why ſhould we continue to exiſt, if it be not good for us, and in order to our Perfection? There is no Shadow of Reaſon for any uneaſy Apprehenſions of hereafter, but in the Conſcience of Guilt and Expectation of

of a juſt Puniſhment. This now is not the Evil of *Death*, but of *Vice*. On this Account we have great Reaſon alſo to fear any Exiſtence at all, here or hereafter. The only Remedy then, and a moſt effectual one too, is the Practice of Virtue and Reaſon. This will moſt certainly ſecure us from all Evil in any future Duration, and fit us for the Enjoyment and Improvement of Immortality. As to the dangerous Effects of paſt Vice, and Tranſgreſſion of Truth and Reaſon, all our Security is in a preſent contrary Practice, Care, and Habit, and in the Mercy of God. The former is in our own Breaſts; the latter we have all Reaſon to hope for on our ſincere Endeavours after Virtue; and may perhaps be further aſſured of by an extraordinary Interpoſition, and thus be delivered from the Bondage of any poſſible Fear of Death. Thus the reaſonable Proſpect of the Glory and Perfection of that State in which we ſhall exiſt after Death, ought, not only to take off all our Fears, but to fill us with a pleaſing Hope: but *that* Life and Immortality which is farther brought to Light, ſhould effectually raiſe our Minds above the World, and comfort us with the joyful Expectation of perfect Happineſs in a better State,

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SECTION XIV.

Of VIRTUE *as a Way to Happineſs.*

SECT. XIV.

In the Purſuit of Happineſs the Methods of Prudence and Virtue ſhould coincide.

THUS far I have conſidered the Means of attaining preſent Happineſs: and theſe, we ſee lie very much in the Practice of Virtue, tho' I have not intended them in that View, but only as ſo many wiſe and proper Means of Happineſs in this Life. Yet Prudence and Virtue do naturally coincide, as all Truth and right Reaſon do, the one with the other. Prudence may and ought to be practiſed on Principles of Virtue, and Virtue is the trueſt Prudence, and the moſt effectual Means of preſent and future Happineſs. Nevertheleſs, they are diſtinct Conſiderations, and we find them ſeparated in Fact, the one often purſued to the Neglect of the other. But it becomes ſuch rational and ſenſible Beings as we are, to be wiſe as well as virtuous, that our Practice of Reaſon may be moſt extenſively uſeful, and that our Search after Happineſs may be effectual and ſecure. After all however, it is plain, the Pleaſures of this State are moſt uncertain, trifling and dangerous; and our Capacities of enjoying them ſmall, and our Continuance here ſhort: we

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are very ignorant of true Happineſs, and can never be ſecure of it but in the Will of God. Therefore I add, that

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THE Practice of Virtue is neceſſary to Happineſs, and the only true way of obtaining it. The Deſign of our preſent Exiſtence is not our proper Happineſs, but a Preparation and Fitneſs for it. Our Natures and Capacities are ſuited to better Enjoyments than this World can afford. No wiſe Man would wiſh to take up his Happineſs here. If we had not greater Things than theſe to hope for, we ſhould deſpair of being ever compleatly happy. Moreover that Conſciouſneſs of Guilt, which the beſt muſt be ſenſible of in ſome Degree, makes us yet more dependent, if poſſible, upon God for Happineſs. That natural Effect of his original Conſtitution, which might have been happy, is mightily interrupted by the unreaſonable Actions of moral Agents; and the Redreſs of this Diſorder, and the Recovery of guilty Beings, may require the Exertion of Divine Wiſdom and Goodneſs. We have therefore the Fear of Miſery to ſecure againſt, as well as the Hopes of Happineſs to obtain. Thus, we are very ill circumſtanced to ſeek out our own Happineſs of ourſelves. Very imperfect Beings, ignorant of the true Nature of Pleaſure, and

The Happineſs of the preſent State is very imperfect and uncertain.

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and the certain Way to it; in an uncertain, vain, and troubleſome State; ſubject to Affections much below our beſt Capacities, and, as it were, out of our pureſt and moſt natural Element; conſcious of Guilt, and obnoxious to Puniſhment; and ſurrounded with a general State of Diſorder, where things have not their natural Courſe; and Reaſon and Truth take little Place.

Our whole Dependence for it is upon our Maker; and our Hope only in the Practice of Virtue;

Now what ſolid Foundation is there for Happineſs, but in the Will and Favour of that Being, who pervades all Nature, and can ſupply all Defects? The Practice of Virtue is all we can do to recommend ourſelves to him. What it is has been largely inquired into; and that this will ſecure the Divine Favour, has been already ſhewn; and is very evident. He cannot but be pleaſed that the whole Creation ſhould obey the Laws of their Natures, which are the ſureſt Notices of his Will. All the inanimate and vegetable World ſubmit, by Neceſſity, to the Laws He has impoſed on Matter and Motion. The ſenſible Tribe are no leſs conſtant Obſervers of thoſe Motives that alone affect them; ever yeilding to the ſtrongeſt Senſations of Pleaſure and Pain, their higheſt Capacities. Men, and all rational and moral Agents, can alone rebel againſt their Maker, and may there-

therefore pleaſe him by a voluntary Obedience. This is an Homage infinitely ſuperior to that of all the reſt of the Creation. None but rational and moral Agents can properly obey and ſerve God, the higheſt Glory of whoſe Works conſiſts in the free Subjection of his rational Subjects. This is the Law of their Natures, as we have ſeen before, and the only poſſible way of recommending themſelves to their Creator. Now the Security of their Happineſs, by this Means, depends wholly on the moral Perfections of God, and the Aſſurance that we have, that he is a moſt reaſonable Being. This alſo has been demonſtrated before. SECT. XIV.

AND ſince he is the Creator and Lord of the Univerſe; ſince he has conſtituted the Natures of all Things that exiſt, and conſequently the Laws they are to obſerve according to their ſeveral Capacities; ſince he knows all our Frame, what Happineſs is, and what Kinds or Degrees we are fit for, as well as what our ſeveral Behaviours and Merits are; ſince he cannot but approve the Practice of Reaſon, and ſupport and encourage the faithful Endeavours of all Beings to pleaſe him; it follows, that all ſenſible and rational Beings, acting according to Reaſon and Truth, do thereby moſt certainly recommend themſelves to

Which will be an effectual Recommendation to all that which is fit for us, throughout our whole Duration.

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to his Favour, and may depend upon all that Happineſs that is fit for them throughout their whole Duration. The Inconveniences and Miſeries of this State do not at all contradict this Truth. They moſt certainly agree to the preſent Circumſtance and Deſign of our Condition, and only argue a better and happier State to come.

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CONCLUSION.

AND now, what ſhould hinder or obſtruct the Virtue and Happineſs of Men? An impartial Inquiry after Truth, and a faithful Obedience to the Reaſon of our own Minds is Virtue. The Virtue of our Principles conſiſts alone in that Impartiality, Induſtry, and Love of Truth, with which they are embraced. This is true Orthodoxy, and better than Infallibility. The Virtue of our Actions conſiſts in their Conformity to the Truth and Reaſon of our Natures and Circumſtances, as they appear to us. In this Senſe, there are virtuous Principles as well as Practices. The Glory of thoſe depend not upon being in the Right, which in many Inſtances may be conteſted among fallible Beings, and is itſelf no Virtue at all; but in the Love of Truth: and the Value of theſe, not upon Subjection to received Maxims and Opinions of others; but to the Dictates of our own Conſciences, and the Reaſon of our own Minds.

HAPPINESS is the Gift of God, partly diſtributed in the Conſtitution of Things, and ſubjected to our Power and Experience; but more eſpecially reſerved to oblige our Dependence

pendence on him, and to reward our Integrity and Constancy in the Practice of Virtue, Reason, and Truth.

THUS, Sir, you have my free and impartial Thoughts concerning the most important Subjects of a rational Inquiry. I did not intend they should have been so tedious, but was not willing to omit any thing material that fell in my way, tho' I touched it ever so slightly. Doubtless you will discover many Defects as well as Redundances, for which, I must refer myself to your usual Goodness. I shall not however wholly fail of my Design, which was to recollect and digest my own Thoughts, and to give you Occasion to exercise yours to better Advantage, and particularly to shew my Regard to your Commands.

I am,

SIR, *&c.*